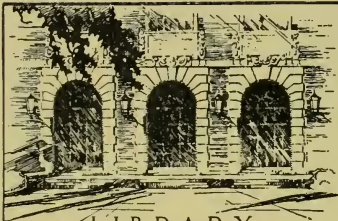


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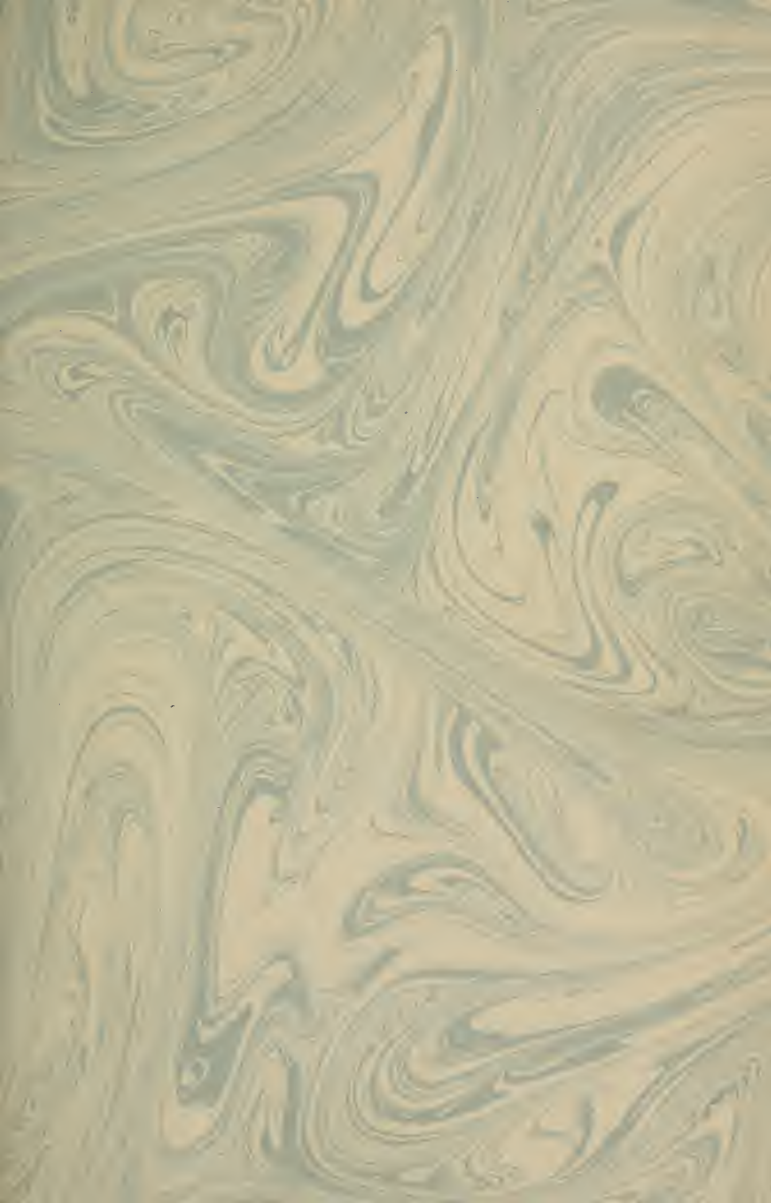


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THE MAROON.

VOL. III.

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THE MAROON.

BY

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AUTHOR OF

“THE RIFLE RANGERS,” “THE SCALP HUNTERS,” ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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THE MAROON.

CHAPTER I.

A STARTLING SUMMONS.

ON the part of Cubina it was now a struggle between prudence and a desire to carry out his original programme—whether he should not go off alone, or still try to communicate with the sleeper in the hammock.

In the former case he could return to the glade, and there await the coming of Herbert Vaughan as at first fixed. But, by so doing, at least two hours would be lost; and even then, would the young Englishman be punctual to his appointment?

Even against his inclination something might occur to cause delay—a thing all the more probable, considering the circumstances

that surrounded him ; considering the irregularity of events in the domicile where he dwelt.

But even a delay of two hours ! In that interval, Loftus Vaughan might have ceased to live !

These thoughts coursed quickly through the mind of the Maroon—accustomed as it was to perceptions almost intuitive. He saw that he must either go by himself to Mount Welcome, or awake the sleeper at once.

Perhaps he would have decided on the former course, but that he had other motives for an interview with Herbert Vaughan, almost as immediate in their necessity as that which related to the safety of the Custos. He had as yet no reason to believe that the peril in which the planter stood was so proximate as it really was : for it never occurred to him that the departure of the two Spaniards had any other object than that which related to their calling—the capture of some runaway slave.

Had he suspected the design of the two ruffians—had he known the mission of murder on which the slave-merchant had dispatched them—he would scarce have stayed for aught

else than to have provided the means of intercepting their design.

In the dark about all this, he did not believe there was such necessity for extreme haste; though he knew something was on foot against the Custos which would not allow of much loss of time.

At that moment the occupant of the hammock turned over with a yawn.

“He is going to awake!” thought Cubina; “now is my time.”

To the disappointment of the Maroon, the limbs of the speaker again became relaxed; and he returned to a slumber profound as before.

“What a pity!” murmured the Maroon; “if I could only speak a word——. But no. Yonder John Crow is more like to hear it than he. I shall throw something down into the hammock. Maybe that will awake him?”

Cubina drew out his tobacco-pipe. It was the only thing he could think of at the moment; and, guiding his arm with a good aim, he pitched it into the hammock.

It fell upon the breast of the sleeper. It was too light. It awoke him not.

“*Crambo!* he sleeps like an owl at noon-tide! What can I do to make him feel me? If I throw down my *machete*, I shall lose the weapon; and who knows I may not need it before I’m out of this scrape? Ha! one of these cocoa-nuts will do. That, I dare say, will be heavy enough to startle him.”

Saying this, the Maroon bent downward; and extending his arm through the fronds beneath him, detached one of the gigantic nuts from the tree.

Poising it for a moment to secure the proper direction, he flung the ponderous fruit upon the breast of Herbert. Fortunately the sides of the hammock hindered it from falling upon the floor, else the concussion might also have awakened the sleeper in the chair.

With a start, the young Englishman awoke, at the same time raising himself upon his elbow. Herbert Vaughan was not one of the exclamatory kind, or he might have cried out. He did not, however; though the sight of the huge brown pericarp, lying between his legs, caused him considerable surprise.

“Where, in the name of Ceres and Pomona, did you rain down from?” muttered he, at

the same time turning his eyes up for an answer to his classical interrogatory.

In the grey light he perceived the palm, its tall column rising majestically above him. He knew the tree well, every inch of its outlines; but the dark *silhouette* on its top—the form of a human being *couchant*, and crouching—that was strange to him.

The light, however, was now sufficiently strong to enable him to distinguish, not only the form, but the face and features of his *ci-devant* entertainer under the greenwood tree—the Maroon captain, Cubina!

Before he could say a word to express his astonishment, a gesture, followed by a muttered speech from the Maroon, enjoined him to silence.

“Hush! not a word, Master Vaughan!” spoke the latter, in a half whisper, at the same time that he glanced significantly along the corridor. “Slip out of your hammock, get your hat, and follow me into the forest. I have news for you—important! Life and death! Steal out; and, for your life, don’t let *him* see you!”

“Who?” inquired Herbert, also speaking in a whisper.

"Look yonder!" said the Maroon, pointing to the sleeper in the chair.

"All right! Well?"

"Meet me in the glade. Come at once—not a minute to be lost! *Those who should be dear to you are in danger!*"

"I shall come," said Herbert, making a motion to extricate himself from the hammock.

"Enough! I must be gone. You will find me under the cotton-tree."

As he said this, the Maroon forsook his seat, so long and irksomely preserved—and, sliding down the slender trunk of the palm, like a sailor descending the mainstay of his ship, he struck off at a trot, and soon disappeared amid the second growth of the old sugar plantation.

Herbert Vaughan was not slow to follow upon his track. Some disclosures of recent occurrence—so recent as the day preceding—had prepared him for a somewhat *bizarre finale* to the fine life he had of late been leading; and he looked to the Maroon for enlightenment. But that strange speech of Cubina stimulated him more than all. "*Those who should be dear to you are in danger!*"

There was but one being in the world entitled to this description. Kate Vaughan ! Could it be she ?

Herbert stayed not to reflect. His hat and cloak hung in the chamber close by ; and in two seconds of time both were upon him. Another second sufficed to give him possession of his gun.

He was too active, too reckless, to care for a stairway at that moment, or at that height from the ground—too prudent to descend by that which there was in front, though guarded only by a sleeper !

Laying his leg over the balustrade, he leaped to the earth below ; and, following the path taken by the Maroon, like him was soon lost among the second growth of the ruinate garden.

CHAPTER II.

BLUE DICK.

IN making his hurried departure from the Happy Valley, Herbert Vaughan narrowly escaped observation. A delay of ten minutes longer would have led to his design being interrupted ; or, at all events, to his being questioned as to the object of his early excursion ; and, in all probability, followed and watched.

He had scarce passed out of sight of the penn, when he heard the jangling tones of a swing bell—harshly reverberating upon the still air of the morning.

The sounds did not startle him. He knew it was not an alarm ; only the plantation bell, summoning the slaves to enter upon their daily toil.

Knowing that it must have awakened the sleeper in the chair, he congratulated himself on his good luck at getting away, before the signal had been sounded—at the same time

that it caused him to quicken his steps towards the *rendezvous* given by the Maroon.

Cubina, though from a greater distance, had also heard the bell, and had in a similar manner interpreted the signal, though with a greater degree of uneasiness as to the effect it might have produced. He, too, had conjectured that the sounds must have awakened the sleeper in the chair.

Both had reasoned correctly. At the first "ding-dong" of the bell, the Jew had been startled from his cat-like slumber, and, rising erect in his seat, he glanced uneasily around him.

"Blesh my soul!" he exclaimed, spitting out the bit of burnt cigar that clung adheringly to his lips. "It ish broad daylight. I musht have been ashleep more ash two hours. Ach! theesh are times for a man to keep awake. The Cushtos should be on his road by thish; and if theesh Spanish hunters do their bishness as clefferly as they hash promise, he'll shleep sounder thish night ash effer he hash done before. Blesh my soul!" he again exclaimed, with an accent that betokened a change in the tenor of his thoughts. "Supposhe they make bungle of the bishness?"

Supposhe they should get caught in the act? Ha! what would be the reshult of that? There ish danger—shtrike me dead if there isn't! Blesh me! I neffer thought of it," continued he, after some moments spent in reflection of an apparently anxious kind. "They might turn King'sh evidence, and implicate me—me, a shustice! To save themselves, they'd be likely to do ash much ash that. Yesh; and eefen if they didn't get taken in the act, still there ish danger. That Manuel hash a tongue ash long ash his *machete*. He'sh a prattling fool. I musht take care to get him out of the Island—both of them—ash soon ash I can."

In his apprehensions the Jew no longer included Chakra: for he was now under the belief that the dark deed would be accomplished by the Spanish assassins; and that to *steel*, not *poison*, would the Custos yield up his life.

Even should Cynthia have succeeded in administering the deadly dose—a probability on which he no longer needed to rely—even should the Custos succumb to poison, the myal-man was not to be feared. There was no danger of such a confederate declaring himself. As for Cynthia, the Jew had never dealt

directly with her; and therefore she was without power to implicate him in the hellish contract.

“I musht take some shteps,” said he, rising from his chair, and making a feint towards retiring to his chamber, as if to adjust his dress. “What ish besht to be done? Let me think,” he added, pausing near the door, and standing in an attitude of reflection; “yesh! yesh! that’s it! I musht send a messensher to Mount Welcome. Some one can go on an excushe of bishness. It will look strange, since we’re such bad neighboursh of late? No matter for that. The Cushtos is gone, I hope; and Rafener can send the message to Mishter Trusty. That will bring ush newsh. Here, Rafener!” continued he, calling to his overseer, who, cart-whip in hand, was moving through the court below, “I wan’t ye, Mishter Rafener!”

Ravener, uttering a grunt to signify that he had heard the summons, stepped up to the stairway of the verandah; and stood silently waiting to know for what he was wanted.

“Hash you any bishness about which you could send a messenger to Mishter Trusty—to Mount Welcome, I mean?”

“Humph! There’s business a plenty for that. Them consarned hogs of the Custos has got into our corn-patch up the valley, and played pitch and toss with the young plants. Ye must get damages for it.”

“That ish right—that ish right.”

“Humph! You won’t say it’s right when once you’ve seen the mess they’ve made. We’ll have a sorry show at crop time, I tell ye.”

“Neffar mind that—we’ll have an action. Ishe not let it pass; but joosh now I hash other bishness on hand. You send a messensher to Mishter Trusty, and tell him about it. And, harksh you, Mishter Rafener! I want this messensher to be dishcreet. I want him to find out whether the Cushtos ish at home—without making a direct ashking about it. I have heard that he ish going on a shourney; and I want to know if he hash set out yet. You undershtands me?”

“All right,” replied Ravener, with an air that betokened comprehension, “All right! I’ll send a fellow that’ll get an answer to that question without asking it. Blue Dick can do that.”

“Ah! true, Blue Dick ish the one! And,

harksh you, Mishter Rafener ! tell him to try if he can see the mulatta wench, Cynthy."

"What is he to say to her?"

"He ish to tell her to come ofer here, if she hash an opportunity. I wants to shpeak with *her*. But, mind ye, Mishter Rafener ! Dick ish to be careful what he saysh and doesh. He musht talk with the girl *only in whishpers*."

"I'll instruct him in all that," replied the overseer, in a tone of confidence. "You want him to go now?"

"Thish minute—thish very minute. I hash a reason for being in a hurry. Send him off as soon ash you can."

Ravener, without further parley, walked off to dispatch his messenger; and a few minutes after he had gone out of the court, that yellow "complected" Mercury, known by the *sobriquet* of "Blue Dick," was seen "streaking" it along the path which conducted from the Jew's penn to the mansion of Mount Welcome.

CHAPTER III.

THE MYSTERIOUS ABSENCE.

THE brief conversation between Jessuron and his overseer had taken place *sotto voce*: as it was not desirable that it should be overheard by any one—much less by the nephew of him who was its chief subject, and who was supposed to be suspended in a hammock not ten paces from the spot.

The hammock, however, was not visible from the front stairway—being hung in that part of the verandah that extended along the other side of the house.

On the departure of Ravener from his presence, the Jew proceeded with his original intention—to put his person in order for the day.

His toilette did not take long. After a very brief absence within his room, he re-appeared on the gallery in the same pocketed blue coat, breeches, and tops, that served him for all purposes and occasions. The coat was

buttoned over his breast, the whitey-brown beaver once more upon his head, and the goggles adjusted on the knife-back ridge of his nose. It was evident he intended a stroll. This was all the more certain as he had regained the umbrella—which had dropped from him during sleep—and, holding it in his grasp, stood by the top of the stairway, as if on the eve of setting forth.

Whither was he going? For what purpose, so early?

His muttered soliloquy declared his design.

“ It musht be to-day—yesh, I musht get them married thish very day; and before any newsh can come. The report of the Cushtos’ death might shpoil all my plans. Who knowsh what the young man might do, if he hash only a hint of hish goot luck? After all, may be, Shoodith ish not so shure of him? She hash said something last night. Ha! it musht be thish day. It is no ushe going to the rector of the parish. He ish the Cushtos’ friend, and might make some obsheckshun. That won’t do—s’help me, no! I musht go to the other. Hee’s poor, and won’t sthand shilly-shally. Besides, hish knot would be shoost as hard to looshe as if it wash tied by

the Bishop of Shamaica. He'll do; and if *he* won't, then I knowsh one who will — for monish; ay, anything for monish!"

After this soliloquy he was about setting foot upon one of the steps with the intention of descending, when a thought appeared to strike him; and turning away from the stair, he walked with shuffling gentleness along the gallery, towards that part of the verandah where the hammock was suspended.

"I supposhe the young shentleman is shtill ashleep. Shentleman, indeed! *now* he ish all that, or will be the next time he goesh to shleep. Well, if he ish, I mushn't dishturb him. Rich shentlemen mushn't have their shlumbers interrupted. *Ach!*"

The exclamation escaped from his lips, as, on rounding the angle of the verandah, he came within sight of the hammock.

"'Tish empty, I declare! He'sh early astir! In hish room, I supposhe?"

Sans cérémonie, the Jew kept on along the gallery, until he had arrived in front of his book-keeper's private apartment. There he stopped, looking inward.

The door was ajar—almost wide open. He could see the greater portion of the interior

through the door ; the rest of it through the jalousies. There was no one in the room—either sitting, standing, or moving about !

“ Mashter Vochan ! Are you there ? ”

The interrogatory was put rather by way of confirming his observation : for he saw there was no one inside.

“ Where are you, Mashter Herbert ? ” continued he, repeating the interrogatory in an altered form—at the same time craning his neck into the apartment, and glancing all around it. “ Ash I live, it’s empty, like the hammock ! He musht have gone out. Yesh. Hish hat’s not here—his cloak ish not here ; and I see no gun. He alwaysh kept hish gun joosh there. How hash he passed me without my hearing his foot ? I shleeps so ash I can hear a cat shtearlin’ over the floor ! Hash he gone by the shtairway at all ? Ash I live, no ! Blesh my soul ! there is a track where somebody musht have shumped over the railing down into the garden ! S’help me, it ish his track ! There’s no other but him to have made it. What the deffil ish the young fellow after this morning ? I hope there ish nothing wrong in it.”

On missing the young Englishman out of

his hammock and room, the penn-keeper felt at first no particular uneasiness. His *protégé* had, no doubt, gone out for a stroll in the woods. He had taken his gun along with him, to have a shot at some early bird looking for the early worm. He had done so many a time before—though never at so early an hour.

The hour, however, was not enough of itself to cause any surprise to his patron; nor even the fact of his having leaped over the verandah railing. He might have seen the owner of the house asleep in his chair near the head of the stairway; and, not wishing to disturb him, had chosen the other mode of exit. There was nothing in all this to cause uneasiness.

Nor would the Jew have thought anything of it had it not been for some other circumstances which quickly came under his notice—guiding him to the suspicion that something *might be amiss*.

The first of these circumstances was that Herbert, although having taken his gun along with him, had left behind his shot-belt and powder-flask! Both were there in his room, hanging upon their peg. They did not escape the sharp glance of the Jew, who at once

began to draw conclusions from their presence.

If the young man had gone out on a shooting excursion, it was strange that he did not take his ammunition along with him !

Perhaps, however, he had seen some sort of game near the house, and, in his hurry to get a shot at it, had gone off hastily—trusting to the two charges which his gun contained. In that case he would not go far, and in a few minutes might be expected back.

A few minutes passed, and a great many minutes—until a full hour had transpired—and still nothing was heard or seen of the book-keeper, though messengers had been dispatched in search of him, and had quartered all the ground for half a mile around the precincts of the penn.

Jessuron — whose matutinal visit to the minister had been postponed by the occurrence — began to look grave.

“ It ish shtrange,” said he, speaking to his daughter, who had now arisen, and was far from appearing cheerful ; “ shtrange he should go abroad in thish fashion, without shaying a word to either of ush ! ”

Judith made no reply : though her silence

could not conceal a certain degree of chagrin, from which she was evidently suffering. Perhaps she had even more reason than the "rabbi" to suspect there was something amiss?

Certainly, something disagreeable—a misunderstanding at least, had arisen between her and Herbert on the preceding day. Her speech had already given some slight hint of it; but much more her manner, which, on the night before, and now unmistakably in the morning, betrayed a mixture of melancholy and suppressed indignation.

It did not add to the equanimity of her temper, when the house wench—who was unslinging the hammock in which Herbert had slept—announced it to contain two articles scarce to be expected in such a place—a cocoa-nut and a tobacco-pipe!

The pipe could not have belonged to Herbert Vaughan: he never smoked a pipe; and as for the cocoa-nut, it had evidently been plucked from the tree standing near. The trunk of the palm exhibited scratches as if some one had climbed up it, and above could be seen the freshly-torn peduncle, where the fruit had been wrenched from its stalk!

What should Herbert Vaughan have been doing up the palm-tree, flinging cocoa-nuts into his own couch?

His unaccountable absence was becoming surrounded by circumstances still more mysterious. One of the cattle-herds, who had been sent in search of him, now coming in, announced a new fact, of further significance. In the patch of muddy soil, outside the garden wall, the herd had discovered the book-keeper's track, going up towards the hills; and near it, on the same path, the footprint of another man, who must have gone over the ground twice, returning as he had come!

This cattle-herd, though of sable skin, was a skilled tracker. His word might be trusted.

It was trusted, and produced an unpleasant impression both on Jessuron and Judith—an impression more unpleasant as time passed, and the book-keeper was still unreturned.

The father fumed and fretted; he did more—he threatened. The young Englishman was his debtor, not only for a profuse hospitality, but for *money advanced*. Was he going to prove ungrateful? A defaulter?

Ah! little had that pecuniary obligation to do with the chagrin that was vexing the Jew

Jessuron—far less with those emotions, like the waves of a stormy sea, that had begun to agitate the breast of his daughter; and which every slight circumstance, like a strong wind, was lashing into fury and foam.

* * * * *

Blue Dick came back. He had executed his errand adroitly. The Custos was gone upon a journey; he had started exactly at the hour of daybreak.

“Goot!” said Jessuron; “but where is hish nephew?”

Blue Dick had seen Cynthia; and whispered a word in her ear, as the overseer had instructed him. She would come over to the penn, as soon as she could find an opportunity for absence from Mount Welcome.

“Goot!” answered the Jew. “But where is Mashter Vochan? where hash he betaken himshelf?”

“Where?” mentally interrogated Judith, as the noonday sun saw the black clouds coursing over her brow.

CHAPTER IV.

A SHADOWED SPIRIT.

THE sun was just beginning to re-gild the glittering flanks of the Jumbé Rock, his rays not yet having reached the valley below, when lights streaming through the jalousied windows of Mount Welcome proclaimed that the inmates of the mansion were already astir.

Lights shone through the lattices of several distinct windows—one from the Custos' sleeping room, another from the apartment of Lilly Quasheba, while a brilliant stream, pouring through the jalousies in front, betokened that the chandelier was burning in the great hall.

From Smythje's chamber alone came no sign either of light or life. The windows were dark, the curtains close drawn. Its occupant was asleep.

Yes, though others were stirring around him,

the aristocratic Smythje was still sleeping as soundly and silently as if dead, perhaps dreaming of the fair "cweeole queetyaws," and his twelve conquests, now happily extended to the desired baker's dozen, by the successful declaration of yesterday.

Though a light still burned in the sleeping apartment of the Custos, and also in that of Kate, neither father nor daughter were in their own rooms. Both were in the great hall, seated by a table, on which, even at this early hour, breakfast had been spread. It was not the regular matutinal meal, as certain circumstances showed. Mr. Vaughan only was eating; while Kate appeared to be present merely for the purpose of pouring out his coffee, and otherwise attending upon him.

The costume in which the Custos appeared differed from his every-day wear. It was that of a man about to set forth upon a journey—in short, a travelling costume. A surtout, of strong material, with ample outside pockets; boots reaching above his knees; a belt, with pistol holsters, around his waist—a guard against any chance encounter with runaway negroes; a felt hat, lying on a chair beside him, and a camlet cloak, hanging over the

back of the same chair—all proclaimed the purpose of a journey, and one about to be entered upon within a few minutes of time.

A pair of large silver spurs buckled over his boots, told also the mode of travel intended. It was to be on horseback.

This was further manifested by the fact that two horses were at that moment standing at the bottom of the stone stairs outside, their forms dimly visible through the blue dawn. Both were saddled, bridled, and equipped, with a black groom by their side, holding them in hand—himself in travelling toggery.

Valises, buckled upon the croup, and saddlebags suspended across the cantle, showed that the travellers were to carry their luggage along with them.

The object of the intended journey is already known. Mr. Vaughan was about to put into execution a design long delayed—to perform a duty which he owed to his daughter, and which, if left unaccomplished, would seriously imperil the prosperity and happiness of her future life. He was about proceeding to the capital of the Island, to obtain from the Assembly that special act of grace, which they alone could give; and which would free his

daughter from those degrading disabilities the Black Code had inflicted upon all of her unfortunate race. Six lines from the Assembly, with the governor's signature attached, though it might not extinguish the *taint*, nor the *taunt* of malevolent lips, would, nevertheless, remove all obstacles to hereditament ; and Kate Vaughan could then become the heiress to her own father's property, without fear of failure.

To sue for this act and obtain it was the purpose of that journey upon which Loftus Vaughan was on the eve of setting forth. He had no apprehension of a failure. Had he been only a book-keeper or small tradesman, he might have been less sanguine of success ; but, Custos of an important precinct, with scores of friends in the Assembly, he knew that he would only have to ask and it would be given him.

For all that, he was not setting out in very high spirits. The unpleasant prospect of having such a long and arduous journey to make was a source of vexation to him : for the Custos liked an easy life, and hated the fatigue of travel.

But there was something besides that

dispirited him. For some days past he had found his health giving way. He had lost appetite, and was rapidly losing flesh. A constant and burning thirst had seized upon him, which, from morning to night, he was continually trying to quench.

The plantation doctor was puzzled with the symptoms, and his prescriptions had failed in giving relief. Indeed, so obstinate and *death-like* was the disease becoming, that the sufferer would have given up his intention of going to Spanish Town—at least, till a more fitting time—but for a hope that, in the capital, some experienced physician might be found who would comprehend his malady and cure it.

Indulging in this hope, he was determined to set forth at all hazards.

There was still another incubus upon his spirits, and one, perhaps, that weighed upon them more heavily than aught else. Ever since the death of Chakra—or rather, since the glimpse he had got of Chakra's ghost—a sort of supernatural dread had taken possession of the mind of Loftus Vaughan. Often had he speculated on that fearful phenomenon, and wondered what it could have been. Had he

alone witnessed the apparition, he might have got over the awe it had occasioned him : for then could he have attributed it to an illusion of the senses—a mere freak of his imagination, excited, as it was at the time, by the spectacle on the Jumbé Rock. But Trusty had seen the ghost, too ! and Trusty's mind was not one of the imaginative kind. Besides, how could both be deluded by the same fancy, and at the same instant of time ?

Turn the thing in his own mind as he might, there was something that still remained inexplicable—something that caused the heart of the Custos to tingle with fear every time that he thought of Chakra and his ghost.

This intermittent awe had oppressed him ever since the day of his visit to the Jumbé Rock—that day described ; for he never went a second time. Nor yet did he afterwards care to venture alone upon the wooded mountain. He dreaded a second encounter with that weird apparition.

In time, perhaps, the fear would have died out, and, in fact, was dying out—the intervals during which it was not felt becoming gradually more extended. Loftus Vaughan, though he could never have forgotten the

myal-man, nor the terrible incidents of his death, might have ceased to trouble himself with thoughts about Chakra's ghost, but for a circumstance that was reported to him on the day that Smythje sank into the dead-wood.

On the afternoon of that day, as Quashie was making his way homeward through the forest and over the hills, the darkey declared that, on passing near a noted spot called the Duppy's Hole, he had "see'd de gose ob ole Chakra !"

Quashie, on reaching home, announced the fact, with chattering teeth, and eyes rolling wildly in their sockets; and, though the loutish boy was only laughed at by his fellow-slaves, the statement made a most painful impression on the mind of his master—restoring it to the state of habitual terror that had formerly held possession of it, and from which it had become only partially relieved.

The circumstance related by Quashie—still fresh in the thoughts of the Custos—had contributed not a little to increase that feeling of dejection and discouragement, under which he suffered at the moment of setting out upon his proposed expedition.

CHAPTER V.

THE STIRRUP-CUP.

IF Loftus Vaughan was in low spirits, not more joyful seemed his daughter, as she assisted at that early *déjeuner*.

On the contrary, a certain sadness overspread the countenance of the young creole ; as if reflected from the spirit of her father.

A stranger to the circumstances that surrounded her might have fancied that it was sympathy—at seeing him so dull and downcast—mingled with the natural regret she might have at his leaving home, and for so long an absence. But one who scrutinized more closely could not fail to note in those fair features an expression of sadness that must have sprung from a different and deeper source.

The purpose of her father's journey may, in part, explain the melancholy that marked the manner of the young creole. She knew that

purpose. She had learnt it from her father's lips, though only on the evening before.

Then, for the first time in her life, was she made acquainted with those adverse circumstances that related to her birth and parentage : for up to that hour she had remained ignorant of her position, socially as well as legally. Then, for the first time, was fully explained to her her own true status in the social scale—the disabilities and degradation under which she suffered.

It was to remove these disabilities—and wipe out, as it were, the degradation—that her father was now going forth.

The young girl did not fail to feel gratitude ; but perhaps the feeling might have been stronger had her father taken less trouble to make her sensible of the service he was about to perform—using it as a lever to remove that reluctance to the union with Smythje which still lingered.

During the few minutes that Mr. Vaughan was engaged in eating his breakfast, not many words passed between them. The viands, luxurious enough, were scarce more than tasted. The intended traveller had no appetite for the

solids with which the table was spread, and seemed to care only for drink.

After quaffing off several cups of coffee, solely from a desire to quench thirst, and without eating bread or anything else along with it, he rose from the table, and prepared to take his departure.

Mr. Trusty entering, announced that the horses and the attendant groom were ready, and waiting outside.

The Custos donned his travelling hat, and with the assistance of Kate and her maid Yola, put on his sleeved cloak: as the air of the early morning was raw and cold.

While these final preparations were being made, a mulatta woman was seen moving about the room—at times acting as an attendant upon the table, at other times standing silently in the background. She was the slave Cynthia.

In the behaviour of this woman there was something peculiar. There was a certain amount of nervous agitation in her manner as she moved about; and ever and anon she was seen to make short traverses to different parts of the room—apparently without errand or

object. Her steps, too, were stealthy, her glances unsteady and furtive.

All this would have been apparent enough to a suspicious person ; but none of the three present appeared to notice it.

The "swizzle" bowl stood on the side-board. While breakfast was being placed on the table, Cynthia had been seen refilling the bowl with this delicious drink, which she had mixed in an outside chamber. Some one asked her why she was performing that, her diurnal duty, at so early an hour—especially as master would be gone before the time of swizzle-drinking should arrive : usually during the hotter hours of the day.

"P'raps massr like drink ob swizzle 'fore he go," was the explanatory reply vouchsafed by Cynthy.

The girl made a successful conjecture. Just as the Custos was about to step outside for the purpose of descending the stairway, a fit of choking thirst once more came upon him, and he called for drink.

"Massr like glass ob swizzle?" inquired Cynthia, stepping up to his side. "I've mixed for massa some berry good," added she, with impressive earnestness.

“Yes, girl,” replied her master. “That’s the best thing I can take. Bring me a large goblet of it.”

He had scarce time to turn round, before the goblet was presented to him, full to the rim. He did not see that the slave’s hand trembled as she held it up, nor yet that her eyes were averted—as if to hinder them from beholding some fearful sight.

His thirst prevented him from seeing anything, but that which promised to assuage it.

He caught hold of the goblet, and gulped down the whole of its contents, without once removing it from his lips.

“You’ve overrated its quality, girl,” said he, returning her the glass. “It doesn’t seem at all good. There’s a bitterish taste about it; but I suppose it’s my palate that’s out of order, and one shouldn’t be particular about the stirrup-cup.”

With this melancholy attempt at appearing gay, Loftus Vaughan bade adieu to his daughter, and, climbing into the saddle, rode off upon his journey.

Ah! Custos Vaughan! That stirrup-cup was the last you were ever destined to drink! In the sparkling “swizzle” was an infusion

of the baneful *Savannah flower*. In that deep draught you had introduced into your veins one of the deadliest of vegetable poisons !

Chakra's prophecy will soon be fulfilled. The death-spell will now quickly do its work. In twenty-four hours you will be a corpse !

CHAPTER VI.

THE HORN SIGNAL.

CUBINA, on getting clear of the penn-keeper's precincts, lost little time in returning to the glade; and, having once more reached the *ceiba*, seated himself on a log to await the arrival of the young Englishman.

For some minutes he remained in this attitude—though every moment becoming more fidgetty, as he perceived that time was passing, and no one came. He had not even a pipe to soothe his impatience: for it had been left in the hammock, into which he had cast it from the *cccoa*.

Before many minutes had passed, however, a pipe would have been to little purpose in restraining his nervous excitement; for the non-appearance of the young Englishman began to cause him serious uneasiness.

What could be detaining him? Had the Jew been awakened? and was he by some means or other, hindering Herbert from com-

ing out? There was no reason, that Cubina could think of, why the young man should be ten minutes later than himself in reaching the *ceiba*. Five minutes—even the half of it—might have sufficed for him to robe himself in such garments as were needed; and then, what was to prevent him from following immediately? Surely, the appeal that had been made to him—the danger hinted at to those dear to him, the necessity^{*} for haste, spoken in unmistakable terms—surely, all this would be sufficient to attract him to the forest, without a moment's hesitation!

Why, then, was he delaying?

The Maroon could not make it out: unless under the disagreeable supposition that the Jew no longer slept, and was intercepting his egress.

What if Herbert might have lost his way in proceeding towards the rendezvous? The path was by no means plain, but the contrary. It was a mere cattle-track, little used by men. Besides, there were others of the same—scores of them trending in all directions, crossing and converging with this very one. The half-wild steers and colts of the penn-keeper ranged the thickets at will. Their tracks

were everywhere; and it would require a person skilled in woodcraft and acquainted with the *lay* of the country, to follow any particular path. It was likely enough that the young Englishman had strayed.

Just then these reflections occurred to Cubina. He chided himself for not thinking of it sooner. He should have stayed by the penn—waited for Herbert to come out, and then taken the road along with him.

“Not to think of that! *Crambo!* how very stupid of me!” muttered the Maroon, pacing nervously to and fro: for his impatience had long since started him up from the log.

“Like enough, he’s lost his way?”

“I shall go back along the path. Perhaps I may find him. At all events, if he’s taken the right road, I must meet him.”

And as he said this, he glided rapidly across the glade, taking the back track towards the penn.

The conjecture that Herbert had strayed was perfectly correct. The young Englishman had never revisited the scene of his singular adventure, since the day that introduced him to the acquaintance of so many queer people. Not but that he had felt the incli-

nation, amounting almost to a desire, to do so; and more than once had he been upon the eve of satisfying this inclination, but, otherwise occupied, the opportunity had not offered itself.

Not greatly proficient in forest lore—as Cubina had also rightly conjectured—especially in that of a West-Indian forest, he had strayed from the true path almost upon the instant of entering upon it; and was at that very moment wandering through the woods in search of the glade where grew the gigantic cotton-tree!

No doubt, in the course of time, he might have found it, or perhaps stumbled upon it by chance, for—made aware, by the earnest invitation he had received, that time was of consequence—he was quartering the ground in every direction, with the rapidity of a young pointer in his first season with the gun.

Meanwhile the Maroon glided rapidly back, along the path leading to the penn, without seeing aught either of the Englishman or his track.

He re-entered the ruinate fields of the old sugar estate, and continued on till within

sight of the house, still unsuccessful in his search.

Proceeding with caution, he stepped over the dilapidated wall of the old orchard. Caution was now of extreme necessity. It was broad day; and, but for the cover which the undergrowth afforded him, he could not have gone a step further without the risk of being seen from the house.

He reached the ruin from which he had before commanded a view of the verandah; and, once more stealing a glance over its top, he obtained a full view of the long rambling corridor.

Jessuron was in it—not as when last seen, asleep in his arm-chair, but on foot, and hurrying to and fro, with quick step and excited mien.

His black-bearded overseer was standing by the stair, as if listening to some orders which the Jew was issuing.

The hammock was still hanging in its place, but its collapsed sides showed that it was empty. Cubina could see that, but no signs of its late occupant—neither in the gallery nor about the buildings.

If still there, he must be in some of the

rooms? But that one which opened nearest the hammock, and which Cubina conjectured to be his bedroom, appeared to be unoccupied. Its door stood ajar, and no one seemed to be inside.

The Maroon was considering whether he should stay a while longer upon the spot, and watch the movements of the two men, when it occurred to him that if the young man had gone out, and up the right path, he must have crossed a track of muddy ground, just outside the garden wall.

Being so near the house—and in the expectation of seeing something there to explain Herbert's delay—he had not stayed to examine this on his second approach.

Crouching cautiously among the trees, he now returned to it; and, almost at the first glance, his eye revealed to him the truth.

A fresh footprint was in the mud, with its heel to the house, and its toe pointing to the path! It was not his own: it must be that of the young Englishman!

He traced the tracks as far as they could be distinguished; but that was only to the edge of the damp earth. Beyond, the ground was dry and firm—covered with a close-cropped carpet

of grass, upon which the hoof of a horse would scarcely have left an impression.

The tracks, however, on leaving the moist ground, appeared as if trending towards the proper path ; and Cubina felt convinced that, for some distance at least, the young Englishman had gone towards the glade.

That he was no longer by the house was sufficiently certain ; and equally so that he had kept his promise and followed Cubina into the woods. But where was he now ?

“ He may have reached the glade in my absence, and be now waiting for me ! ” was the reflection of the Maroon.

Stimulated by this, as well as by the chagrin which his mischances or mismanagement were causing him, he started back along the path at a run—as if struggling in a match against time.

Far quicker than before he reached the glade, but, as before, he found it untenanted ! No Englishman was under the *ceiba*—no human being in sight.

As soon as he had fairly recovered breath, he bethought him of shouting. His voice might be of avail in guiding the wanderer to the glade ; for Cubina now felt convinced that

the young Englishman was straying—perhaps wandering through the woods at no great distance from the spot. His shouts might be heard; and although the stranger might not recognize the voice, the circumstances were such that he might understand the object for which it was put forth.

Cubina shouted, first at a moderate pitch, then hallooed with all the strength of his lungs.

No answer, save the wood echoes.

Again and again: still no response.

“*Crambo!*” exclaimed he, suddenly thinking of a better means of making his presence known. “He may hear my horn! He may remember that, and know it. If he’s anywhere within a mile, I’ll make him hear it.”

The Maroon raised the horn to his lips and blew a long, loud blast—then another, and another.

There was a response to that signal; but not such as the young Englishman might have been expected to make. Three shrill bugle blasts, borne back upon the breeze, seemed the echoes of his own.

But the Maroon knew they were not. On

hearing them, he let the horn drop to his side, and stood in an attitude to listen.

Another—this time a single wind—came from the direction of the former.

“Three and one,” muttered the Maroon; “it’s Quaco. He needn’t have sounded the last, for I could tell his *tongue* from a thousand. He’s on his way back from Savanna-la-Mer—though I didn’t expect him to return so soon. So much the better—I may want him.”

On finishing the muttered soliloquy, the Maroon captain stood as if considering.

“*Crambo!*” he muttered after a pause, and in a tone of vexation. “What has become of this young fellow? I must sound again—lest Quaco’s horn may have misled him. This time, lieutenant, hold your tongue!”

So saying, and speaking as if the “lieutenant” was by his side, he raised the horn once more to his lips, and blew a single blast—giving it an intonation quite different from the others.

After an interval of silence, he repeated the call in notes exactly similar, and then, after another pause, once again.

To none of these signals did the "tongue" of Quaco make reply; but shortly after, that worthy responded to the original summons by presenting himself *in propria persona*.

CHAPTER VII.

QUACO'S QUEER ENCOUNTER.

QUACO came into the glade carrying a large bundle upon his back—under which he had trudged all the way from 'Savanna-la-Mer.

He was naked to the breech-cloth—excepting the hog-skin greaves upon his shanks, and the old brimless hat upon his head. This, however, was all the costume Quaco ever wore—all, indeed, that he owned; for, notwithstanding that he was the lieutenant, his uniform was no better than that of the meanest private of the band.

His captain, therefore, exhibited no surprise at the scantiness of Quaco's clothing; but what did surprise Cubina was the air with which he entered the glade, and some other circumstances that at once arrested his attention.

The skin of the colossus was covered with a white sweat that appeared to be oozing from

every pore of his dark epidermis. This might have been occasioned by his long walk—the last hour of it under a broiling sun, and carrying weight, as he was: for the bag upon his back appeared a fifty-pounder, at least, to say nothing of a large musket balanced upon the top of it.

None of these circumstances, however, would account for that inexplicable expression upon his countenance—the wild rolling of his yellow eyeballs—the quick, hurried step, and uncouth gesticulations by which he was signaling his approach.

Though, as already stated, they had arrested the attention of his superior, the latter, accustomed to a certain reserve in the presence of his followers, pretended not to notice them. As his lieutenant came up, he simply said:—

“I am glad you are come, Quaco.”

“An’ a’m glad, Cappin Cubina, I’ve foun’ ye har. War hurryin’ home fass as my legs cud carry me, ’spectin’ to find ye thar.”

“Ha!” said Cubina; “some news, I suppose. Have you met anyone in the woods—that young Englishman from the Jew’s penn? I’m expecting him here. He appears to have missed the way.”

“Han’t met no Englishman, Cappin. Cussos Vaughan am that—I’s e a met *him*.”

“*Crambo!*” cried Cubina, starting as he uttered the exclamation. “You’ve met Custos Vaughan? When and where?”

“When—dis mornin’. Where—’bout fo’ mile b’yond the crossin’ on the Carrion Crow road. That’s where I met *him*.”

The emphasis upon the last word struck upon the ear of Cubina. It seemed to imply that Quaco, on his route, had encountered others.

“Anybody else, did you meet?” he inquired, hurriedly, and with evident anxiety as to the answer.

“Ya-as, Cappin,” drawled out the lieutenant, with a coolness strongly in contrast with his excited manner on entering the glade. But Quaco saw that his superior was waiting for the coming of the young Englishman, and that he need not hurry the communication he was about to make. “Ya-as, I met ole Plute, the head driver at Moun’ Welcome. He was ridin’ ’longside o’ the Cussos, by way o’ his escort.”

“Nobody else?”

“Not jess then,” answered Quaco, evidently

holding back the most interesting item of news he had to communicate. "Not jess then, Cappin Cubina."

"But afterwards? Speak out, Quaco! Did you meet anyone going on the same road?"

The command, with the impatient gesture that accompanied it, brought Quaco to a quicker confession than he might have volunteered.

"I met, Cappin Cubina," said he, his cheeks bulging with the importance of the communication he was about to make, while his eyes rolled like "twin jelly balls" in their sockets—"I met next, not a *man*, but a *ghost*!"

"A ghost?" said Cubina, incredulously.

"A duppy, I sw'ar by the great Accompong—same as I saw before—the ghost of ole Chakra!"

The Maroon captain again made a start, which his lieutenant attributed to surprise at the announcement he had made.

Cubina did not undeceive him as to the cause.

"And where?" interrogated he, in hurried phrase. "Where did you meet the ghost?"

"I didn't zackly meet it," answered Quaco. "I only seed it on the road afore me—'bout a

hundred yards or tharaway. I wor near enuf to be sure o' it—and it was Chakra's ghost—jess as I seed him t'other day up thar by the Duppy Hole. The old villain can't sleep in his grave. He's about these woods yet."

"How far was it from where you met Mr. Vaughan?"

"Not a great way, Cappin. 'Bout a quar-rer o' a mile, I shed think. Soon as it spied me, it tuk to the bushes, and I seed no more on it. It was atter daylight, and the cocks had crowed. I heard 'em crowing at ole Jobson's plantation close by, and, maybe, that sent the duppy a-scuttlin' into the river."

"We must wait no longer for this young man—we must be gone from here, Quaco."

And as Cubina expressed this intention, he appeared about to move away from the spot.

"Stop, Cappin," said Quaco, interrupting with a gesture that showed he had something more to communicate; "you han't heard all. I met more of 'em."

"More of whom?"

"That same queer sort. But two mile atter I'd passed the place where I seed the duppy o' the ole myal-man, who d'ye think I met nex'?"

“Who?” inquired Cubina, half guessing at the answer.

“Them debbil’s kind—like enough company for the duppy—them dam’ Spaniards of de Jew’s penn.”

“Ah! *maldito!*” cried the Maroon captain, in a voice of alarm, at the same time making a gesture as if a light had suddenly broken upon him. “The Spaniards, you say! They, too, after him! Come, Quaco, down with that bundle! throw it in the bush—anywhere! there’s not a moment to be lost. I understand the series of encounters you have had upon the road. Luckily, I’ve brought my gun, and you yours. We may need them both before night. Down with the bundle, and follow me!”

“Stop and take me with you,” cried a voice from the edge of the glade; “I have a gun, too.”

And at the same moment the young Englishman, with his gun upon his shoulder, was seen emerging from the underwood and making towards the *ceiba*.

CHAPTER VIII.

AN UNCLE IN DANGER.

“You appear to be in great haste, Captain Cubina,” said Herbert, advancing in double-quick time. “May I know what’s the matter? Anything amiss?”

“Amis, Master Vaughan? Much, indeed. But we shouldn’t stand to talk. We must take the road to Savannah, and at once.”

“What! you want me to go to Savannah? I’m with you for any reasonable adventure; but my time’s not exactly my own, and I must first have a reason for such a journey.”

“A good reason, Master Vaughan. Your uncle, the Custos, is in trouble.”

“Ah!” exclaimed the young Englishman, with an air of disappointment. “Not so good a reason as you may think, Captain. Was it he you meant when you said, just now, one who *should be* dear to me was in danger?”

“It was,” answered Cubina.

"Captain Cubina," said Herbert, speaking with a certain air of indifference, "this uncle of mine but little deserves my interference."

"But his life's in danger!" urged the Maroon, interrupting Herbert in his explanation.

"Ah!" ejaculated the nephew, "do you say that? If his life's in danger, then——"

"Yes," said the Maroon, again interrupting him, "and *others*, too, may be in peril from the same enemy—yourself, perhaps, Master Vaughan. Ay, and maybe those that might be dear to you as yourself."

"Ha!" exclaimed Herbert—this time in a very different tone of voice, "you have some evil tidings, Captain! pray tell me all at once."

"Not now, Master Vaughan, not now! There's not a moment to be wasted in talk; we must take the route at once. I shall tell you as we go along."

"Agreed, then," cried Herbert. "If it's a life and death matter, I'm with you—even to Savannah! No *book-keeping* to-day, Master Jessuron, and——" (the speaker only mentally pronounced the name) "Judith may well spare me for one day—especially for such

a purpose as the saving of lives. All right ; I'm with you, Captain Cubina."

"*Vamos !*" cried the Maroon, hastily moving off. "For want of horses we must make our legs do double-quick time. These skulking scoundrels have sadly got the start of us."

And saying this, he struck into the up-hill path, followed by Herbert—the taciturn lieutenant, no longer embarrassed by his bundle, keeping close in the rear.

The path Cubina had chosen appeared to conduct to Mount Welcome.

"You are not going *there*?" inquired Herbert, in a significant way, at the same time stopping, and appealing to his conductor for an answer.

It had just occurred to the nephew that a visit to his uncle's house might place him in a position both unpleasant and embarrassing.

"No !" answered the Maroon ; "there is no longer any need for us to go to the house : since the Custos has left it long hours ago. We could learn nothing there more than I know already. Besides, it's half a mile out of our way. We should lose time ; and that's the most important of all. We shall presently turn out of

this path, into one that leads over the mountain by the Jumbé Rock. That's the shortest way to the Savannah road. *Vamos!*"

With this wind-up to his speech, the Maroon again moved on; and Herbert, his mind now at rest, strode silently after.

Up to this time the young Englishman had received no explanation of the object of the journey he was in the act of undertaking; nor had he asked any. The information, though as yet only covertly conveyed—that those dear to him were in danger—was motive enough for trusting the Maroon.

Before long, however, it occurred to him that he ought to be informed of the nature of that danger; over whom it impended; and what was the signification of the step they were now taking to avert it.

These questions he put to his conductor, as they hastened together along the path.

In hurried phrase the Maroon made known to him much, though not all, of what he himself knew of the position of affairs—more especially of the peril in which the Custos appeared to be placed. He gave an account of his own descent into the Duppy's Hole; of the

conversation he had overheard there; and, though still ignorant of the motives, stated his suspicions of the murderous plot in which Herbert's own employer was playing a principal part.

It is needless to say that the young Englishman was astounded by these revelations.

Perhaps he would have been still more astonished, but that the development of these wicked dealings was only a confirmation of a whole series of suspicious circumstances that for some days before had been constantly coming under his notice, and for which he had been vainly seeking an explanation.

From that moment all thoughts of returning to dwell under the roof of Jacob Jessuron vanished from his mind. To partake of the hospitality of such a man—a murderer, at least by intent—was completely out of the question. He at once perceived that his fine sinecure situation must be given up; and, despite the scandal his desertion might bring about, he could never again make his home in the Happy Valley. Even the fascinations of the fair Judith would not be strong enough to attract him thither.

Cubina listened to these resolves, and appa-

rently with great satisfaction. But the Maroon had not yet made known to Herbert many other secrets, of which he had become the depository; and some of which might be to the young Englishman of extremest interest. The communication of these he reserved to a future opportunity—when time might not be so pressing.

Herbert Vaughan, now apprised of the peril in which his uncle stood, for the time forgot all else, and only thought of pressing onward to his aid. Injuries and insults appeared alike forgotten and forgiven—even that which had stung him more sharply than all—the cold, chilling bow at the Smythje ball.

Beyond the Jumbé Rock, and at no great distance from the by-path by which they were travelling, lay the proper country of the Maroons. By winding a horn, it might have been heard by some of the band; who at that hour would, no doubt, be engaged in their usual occupation—hunting the wild hog.

Cubina knew this; and, on arriving at that point on the path nearest to his town, he halted, and stood for a moment reflecting.

Then, as if deeming himself sufficiently

strong in the companionship of the robust young Englishman and the redoubtable lieutenant, he gave up the idea of calling any of them to his assistance; and once more moved forward along the route towards the Savannah road.

CHAPTER IX.

AN EQUESTRIAN EXCURSION.

THROUGHOUT the day the penn-keeper kept to his penn. The unexplained absence of his *protégé* rendered it prudent to postpone his proposed visit to the minister: besides, Cynthia was expected.

From the mulatta he hoped to obtain much information. Her knowledge of events must be fresher than even that of Chakra—else would he have gone up to the Duppy's Hole to consult the oracle of Obi. Cynthia would be likely to know all. She could at least tell him whether the spell had been administered—how, and when.

These were facts worth knowing, and Jessuron stayed at home to await the advent of Cynthia.

Not so Judith. Devoured by spleen, inaction was too irksome. She could not content herself in the house; and resolved to seek outside, if not solace, at least distraction

to her thoughts. Shortly after breakfast she ordered her steed to be saddled, and prepared to set forth.

Strange it was that he should absent himself on that day above any other! Just after his uncle had departed on a journey! That was strange!

Judith summoned the herdsman who had discovered the tracks in the mud.

"You are sure it was the track of young Master Vaughan you saw?"

"Sartin sure, Missa Jessuron—one ob 'em war."

"And the other? What was *it* like? Was it also the track of a man?"

"Ya, missa; 'twar a man's track—least-wise, I nebber seed a woman track big as dat 'ere. Sartin de sole dat make it wor de fut ob a man, though it wa'n't the boot ob a gen'l'man like young Massa Vaughan."

Whip in hand, the Jewess stood reflecting.

A messenger might it be? From whom, if not from Kate Vaughan? With whom else was he acquainted? Such strange conditions of relationship! The mysterious mode by which the messenger must have

approached him : for fresh mud upon the bark of the tree told that he who had climbed up must have been the same who had made the footmarks by the garden wall. The articles found in the hammock had been flung down to awake and warn the sleeper.

Clearly a secret message, delivered by a crafty messenger ! Clearly a surreptitious departure !

And the motive for all this ? No common one ?—it could not be. No errand after game. The fowling-piece was gone ; but that was no evidence of an intention to spend the day in sporting. Herbert was in the habit of taking his gun, whenever he strolled out into the fields or forest. But the other and necessary paraphernalia had been left behind ! A shooting excursion ? Nothing of the sort !

A messenger with a love message—a summons willingly accepted—promptly responded to !

“ Oh, if it be ! ” cried the proud, passionate woman, as she sprang upon the back of her steed ; “ if it be, I shall know it ! I shall have revenge ! ”

The horse came in for a share of this jealous

indignation. A spiteful cut of the whip, and a fierce "dig" from her spurred heel, set the animal in rapid motion—his head towards the hills.

Judith Jessuron was a splendid equestrian, and could manage a horse as well as the best breaker about her father's penn.

In the saddle she was something to be seen and admired: her brilliant beauty, enhanced by the charm of excitement, exhibiting itself in the heightened colour of her cheeks, and the stronger flashing of her dark Jewish eyes. The outline of her form was equally attractive. Of full womanly development, and poised in the saddle with an air of piquant *abandon*, it illustrated the curve of Hogarth in all its luxuriant gracefulness. Such a spectacle was calculated to elicit something more than ordinary admiration; and it required a heart already pre-occupied to resist its fascinations. If Herbert Vaughan had escaped them, it could only have been from having his heart thus defended from a danger that few men might have tempted with a chance of safety!

Galloping across the old garden, with a single leap she cleared the ruined wall; and,

arriving at the spot where were still to be seen those tell-tale tracks, she reined up, and leaned over to examine them.

Yes—that was his track—his small foot was easily distinguished! The other? There it was—the footprint of a negro—pegged brogans! White men do not wear them. Some of the slave people of Mount Welcome? But why twice back and forward? Was not once sufficient? Had there been a double message? There might have been—a warning, and afterwards an appointment!

Perhaps, to meet in the forest? Ha! perhaps at that moment!

The bitter conjecture brought her reflections to an abrupt ending; and, once more plying whip and spur, the jealous equestrian dashed rapidly on, up the sloping path that trended towards the hills.

The purpose of this expedition, on the part of the Jewess, was altogether indefinite. It simply sprang from that nervous impatience that would not permit her to rest—a faint hope that during her ride she might discover some clue to the mysterious disappearance. Wretchedness might be the reward of that

ride. No matter! Uncertainty was unendurable.

She did not go exactly in the direction of Mount Welcome, though thither went her thoughts. She had never been a guest of the Custos, and therefore had no colourable excuse for presenting herself at the mansion—else she would have ridden direct to it.

Her design was different.

Though she might not approach the house, she could reconnoitre it from a distance; and this had she determined upon doing.

She had fixed upon the Jumbé Rock as the best point of observation. She knew that its summit commanded a bird's-eye view of Mount Welcome estate, lying under the mountain like a spread map, and that any movement by the mansion, or in the surrounding inclosures, might be minutely marked—especially with the aid of a powerful *lorgnette*, with which she had taken the precaution to provide herself.

With this intent did she head her horse towards the Jumbé Rock—urging the animal with fierce, fearless energy up the difficult acclivity of the mountain.

CHAPTER X.

SMYTHJE AMONG THE STATUES.

AT that hour, when the heart of Judith Jesuron was alternately torn by the passions of love and jealousy, a passion equally profound, though apparently more tranquil, was burning in the breast of Lilly Quasheba, inspired by the same object—Herbert Vaughan.

In vain had the young creole endeavoured to think indifferently of her cousin : in vain had she striven to reconcile her love with what her father had taught her to deem her duty, and think differently of Mr. Smythje—in vain. The effort only ended in a result the very opposite to that intended—in strengthening her passion for the former, and weakening her regard for the latter. And thus must it ever be with the heart's inclinings, as well as its disinclinings. Curbed or opposed, it is but its instinct in both cases to rebel.

From that hour in which Kate had yielded to the will of her father, and consented to be-

come the wife of Montagu Smythje, she felt more sensibly than ever the sacrifice she was about to make. But there were none to step forth and save her—no strong hand and stout heart to rescue her from her painful position. It had now become a compromise; and, summoning all the strength of her soul, she awaited the unhappy issue with such resignation as she could command.

She had but one thought to cheer her, if cheer it could be called—she had not sacrificed her *filial* affection. She had performed the wishes of her father—that father who, however harsh he might be to others, had been ever kind and affectionate to her. Now, more than ever, did she feel impressed with his kindness, when she considered the errand on which he had gone forth.

Though thus resigned, or trying to feel so, she could neither stifle her passion for Herbert, nor conceal the melancholy which its hopelessness occasioned; and during all that morning, after her father had left her, the shadow appeared upon her countenance with more than its wonted darkness.

Her lover—that is, her *fiancé*—for Smythje now stood to her in that relationship—did not

fail to observe her unusual melancholy, though failing to attribute it to the true cause.

It was natural that the young lady should feel sad at the absence of her worthy parent, who for many years had never been separated from her beyond the period of a few hours' duration, or, at most, a single day. She would soon get used to it, and then all would be right again.

With some such reflections did Smythje account for the abstraction which he had observed in the behaviour of his betrothed.

During all the morning he had been assiduous in his attentions—more than wontedly so. He had been left by the Custos in a proud position—that of *protector*—and he was desirous of showing how worthy he was of the trust reposed in him.

Alas ! in the opinion of Kate he was by far too assiduous.

The *protégée* felt importuned ; and his most well-meant attentions had the effect only to weary her. Too glad would she have been to be left alone to her sighs and her sadness.

Shortly after breakfast, Smythje proposed a stroll—a short one. He had no zest for toilsome excursions ; and, since the day of his

shooting adventure, no zeal again to attempt any distant traverse of the forest.

The stroll was only to extend to the shrubbery and among the statues set there. The weather was temptingly fine. There was no reason why Kate Vaughan should refuse ; and, with a mechanical air, she acceded to the proposal.

Smythje discussed the statues, drawing largely from the stock of classic lore which his University had afforded him—dilating more especially on those of Venus, Cupid, and Cleopatra, all suggestive of the tender sentiments that were stirring within his own romantic bosom, and to which, more than once, he took occasion to allude. Though narrowly did he watch to see what effect his fine speeches were producing, he failed to perceive any that gave him gratification. The countenance of his companion obstinately preserved that air of pre-occupation that had been visible upon it all the morning.

In the midst of one of his scholastic dissertations, the classical exquisite was interrupted by the advent of his valet, Thoms—who appeared coming from the house with the air of a servant who brings a message for his master.

The message was declared : a gentleman friend of Mr. Smythje—for he had now many such in the Island—had called to see him. No particular business—merely a call of compliment.

The name was given. It was one which should be honoured by a polite reception ; else the proud owner of Montagu Castle might have declined leaving the company in which he was upon so trivial a purpose. But the visitor was one of note—a particular friend, too. Miss Vaughan would not deem him rude, leaving her only for a moment ?

“ By no means,” said Kate, with a free haste that almost said as much as that she was only too glad to get quit of him.

Smythje followed his valet into the house ; and the young creole was left among the statues alone—herself the fairest shape in all that classical collection.

CHAPTER XI.

A STRANGE DETERMINATION.

FOR some moments after Smythje was gone, Kate Vaughan remained where he had left her—silent and motionless as the sculptured marbles by her side. Niobe was near; and, as if by accident, the eyes of the young creole turned upon the statue of the weeping daughter of Dione.

“Ah!” muttered she, struck with a strange thought; “unhappy mother of a murdered offspring! If thy sadness was hard to endure as mine, thy punishment must have been a pleasure. Would that I, like thee, were suddenly turned into stone. Ah, me!”

And finishing her apostrophe with a profound sigh, she stood for some time silently gazing upon the statue.

After a while her thoughts underwent some change; and along with it her eyes wandered away from the statues and the shrubbery. Her

glance was turned upward towards the mountain, and rested upon its summit—the Jumbé Rock now glittering gaily under the full sheen of the sunlight.

“There,” soliloquized she, in a low murmur, “upon that rock, and there only, have I felt one hour of true happiness—that happiness of which I have read in books of romance, without believing in ; but which I now know to be real—to gaze into the eyes of him you love, and think, as I then thought, that you are loved in return. Oh ! it was bliss ! it was bliss !”

The remembrance of that brief interview with her cousin—for it was to that her words referred—came so forcibly before the mind of the impassioned young creole as to stifle her utterance, and for a moment or two she was silent.

Again she continued—

“An hour, have I said ? Ah ! scarce a minute did the sweet delusion last ; but had I my choice I would rather live that minute over again, than all the rest of my past life—certainly, than all of it that is to come !”

Again she paused in her speech, still gazing

upon the rock—whose sparkling surface seemed purposely presented to her eyes, as if to cheer her heart with the sweet *souvenir* it recalled.

“Oh! I wonder,” she exclaimed at length, “I wonder how it would be, were I but up there again! To stand on the spot where I stood! Could I fancy him, as then, beside me? Could I recall the look he gave me, and my own sweet thoughts as I returned it? Oh! it would be like some delicious dream!”

Passion again called for a pause; but soon after, her reflections found speech.

“And why should I not indulge in it? why not? What harm can it do me? Even if the *souvenir* should bring sadness, it cannot add to that which now overwhelms me. No; I need not fear to tempt the trial; and I shall. This very hour shall I go up and stand upon that same spot. There shall I invoke the past, and give to memory, to fancy, its fullest play. I need not fear. There will be no witness but the heaven above and the God who dwells in it—alike witness to the sacrifice of a broken heart made in the fulfilment of my duty.”

On completing this impassioned speech,

the young girl raised a kerchief of white cambric which she carried in her hand, and hastily adjusting it over the luxuriant plaits of her hair, glided towards the rear of the mansion.

She did not turn aside to enter the house, nor even to warn any one of her sudden determination, but, hastening on, soon reached the back of the garden.

There a small wicket-gate gave her egress into the woods—a path from that point trending in traverses, zigzag fashion, up the mountain slope.

It was the same path she had followed upon the day of the eclipse; but how different were the thoughts that now agitated her bosom from those she had indulged in upon that memorable occasion! Even then, it is true, her spirits were far from being cheerful; but still there was hope ahead. She had not then arrived at the full knowledge of Herbert's indifference towards her—of his determination towards her more fortunate rival. The circumstances that had since transpired—the scenes that had come under her own observation—the rumours heard and too substantially confirmed—all had combined to extinguish

that little gleam of hope so faint and feebly flickering.

Indeed, there was upon that very morning a new thought in her mind, calculated still further to render her sad and humiliated.

The revelations which her father had made before starting on his journey—the admissions as to the inferiority of her race, and contingently of her social rank, which he had been compelled to make—had produced, and no wonder, a painful impression upon the spirits of the quinteroon.

She could not help asking herself whether Herbert's disregard of her had aught to do with this? Was it possible that her own cousin was slighting her on account of this social distinction? Did he, too, feel shy of the *taint*? More than once during that day had she mentally put these interrogatories without being able to determine whether they merited a negative or affirmative answer.

And what was her errand now? To resuscitate within her soul the memory of one moment of bliss—to weave still more inextricably around her heart the spell that was threatening to strangle it—to stifle the happiness of her whole life.

But that was already gone. There could be no daring now—no danger worth dread.

The zigzag path she ascended with free step and air undaunted—her fair, bright form gleaming, meteor-like, amid the dark green foliage of the forest.

CHAPTER XII.

A JEALOUS RECONNOISSANCE.

THE ravine leading up the rear of the Jumbé Rock—the only way by which its summit could be reached—though easily scaled by a pedestrian, was not practicable for a person on horseback.

On reaching the base of the cliff the jealous equestrian dismounted, made fast her bridle to the branch of a tree, and, after unbuckling the little spur and removing it from her heel, continued the ascent *à pied*.

Arrived at the summit she took her stand near the edge of the platform, in a position that commanded an unbroken view of the mansion of Mount Welcome, its shrubberies and surroundings.

Satisfied with the situation, she instantly commenced her *reconnaissance*.

She did not at first make use of her *lorgnette*.

Any human figures that might be moving around the house could be seen by the naked

eye. It would be time enough to use the magnifying lens should there be a difficulty of identifying them.

For some moments after she had taken her stand no one made appearance near or around the dwelling. A complete tranquillity reigned over the spot. A pet *axis* deer skipping over the lawn, some pea-fowl moving amidst the shrubbery of the *parterre*—their purple gorgets gaily glittering in the sun—were the only objects animate that could be seen near the house.

Farther off in the fields gangs of negroes were at work among the cane, with what appeared to be a white overseer moving in their midst. These had no interest for the observer upon the rock ; and her eye, scarce resting on them for a second, returned to scan the inclosed space approximate to the dwelling, in the hope of there seeing something—form, incident, or scene—that might give her some clue to the mystery of the morning.

In respect to the former, she was not disappointed. Forms, scenes, and incidents were all offered in succession ; and though they did but little to elucidate the enigma which had carried her to that aerial post of observation,

they had the effect of calming, to some extent, the jealous thought that was distressing her.

First she saw a gentleman and lady step out from the house and take their stand among the statues. At the sight she felt a slight flutter of uneasiness; until through the *lorgnette* she looked upon hay-coloured hair and whiskers, enabling her to identify the owner as Smythje. This gave her a species of contentment; and her jealous spirit was still further tranquillized when the glass revealed to her the features of Kate Vaughan overspread with an expression of extreme sadness.

“Good!” muttered the delighted spy; “that tells a tale. She cannot have seen him? Surely not, or she would not be looking so woe-begone?”

At this moment another figure was seen approaching across the *parterre* towards the two who stood among the statues. It was that of a man in a dark dress. Herbert Vaughan wore that colour.

With a fresh flutter of uneasiness, the *lorgnette* was carried back to the eye.

“Bah! it is not he. A fellow with a common face—a servant, I suppose. Very likely

the valet I've heard of! He has brought some message from the house. Ha! they're going in again. No, only the master. She stays. Odd enough he should leave her alone! So much for your politeness, Mr. Montagu Smeith-jay!"

And, with a sneering laugh as she pronounced the name, the fair spy again took the glass from her eye, and appeared for a moment to give way to the gratification which she had drawn from what she had succeeded in observing.

Certainly there were no signs of the presence of Herbert Vaughan about the precincts of Mount Welcome, nor anything to indicate that he had had an interview with his cousin. If so, it must have ended just as the Jewess might have wished: since the expression observable on the countenance of Kate showed anything but the traces of a reconciliation.

Pleased to contemplate her in this melancholy mood, her jealous rival again raised the glass to her eye.

"Ha!" she exclaimed on the instant. "Whatever is the nigger doing in front of the statue? She appears to be talking to it.

An interesting dialogue, I do declare! Ha! ha! ha! Perhaps she is worshipping it? Ha! ha! She seems as much statue as it. 'Patience upon a monument, smiling'——Ha! ha! ha!

"Ah, now," resumed the hilarious observer, still gazing through the glass, "she turns from the statue. As I live, she is looking up this way! She cannot see me? No, not with the naked eye. Besides, there is only my head and hat above the edge of the rock. She won't make them out. How steadfastly she looks this way! A smile upon her face! That, or something like it! One might fancy she was thinking of that pretty scene up here, the interesting tableau——Smythje on his knee. Ha! ha! ha!

"Ah! what now?" she continued, interrogatively; at the same time suddenly ceasing from her laughter, as she saw the young creole adjust the scarf over her head, and glide towards the back of the house. "What can it mean? She appears bent on an excursion! Alone, too! Yes, alone, as if she intended it! See! she passes the house with stealthy step——looks towards it, as if fearing some one to

come forth and interrupt her! Through the garden!—through the gate in the wall! Ha! she's coming up the mountain!"

As the Jewess made this observation, she stepped a pace forward upon the rock, to gain a better view. The *lorgnette* trembled as she held it to her eye: her whole frame was quivering with emotion.

"Up the mountain!" muttered she. "Yes, up the mountain! And for what purpose? To meet—Herbert Vaughan?"

A half-suppressed scream accompanied the thought: while the glass, lowered by her side, seemed ready to fall from her fingers.

CHAPTER XIII.

A SPY IN AMBUSH.

You have seen a proud bird, whose wing has been broken by the fatal bullet, drop helpless to the earth?

So fell the heart of Judith Jessuron from the high confidence that but the moment before had been buoying it up.

The sight of Kate Vaughan coming up the mountain path at once robbed it of exultation—even of contentment.

What errand could the young creole have up there, unless that of an assignation? And with whom, but the man who was so mysteriously missing?

Her surreptitious departure from the dwelling—the time chosen, when Smythje was out of the way—her quick gait and backward glances as she stole through the shrubbery: all indicated a fear of being seen and followed.

And why should she fear either, if bent

upon an ordinary errand? Mr. Smythje was not her father, nor, as yet, her husband. Why should she care to conceal her intentions from him : unless indeed they were clandestine, and pointing to that very purpose which the jealous Jewess had conjectured—a rendezvous with Herbert Vaughan?

Judith felt convinced of it—so fully that, as soon as she saw the young creole fairly started up the sloping path, she glided to the rear edge of the platform, and looked down, expecting to see the other party to the assignation.

True, she saw no one ; but this did little to still the agitation now vibrating through every nerve of her body. *He* was not in sight, but that signified not. Perhaps he was at that moment within hearing, and might be seen, but for the forest screen that covered the *façade* of the mountain?

Where was it their design to meet? Where had they named their appointment?

Judith did not doubt that there was design—jealousy did not stay to ask the question. She was convinced that an arrangement had been made, and on that very morning. What else could be the meaning of the double

message? First, to demand a meeting; secondly to appoint the place. Yes, that would explain the repetition of those foot-marks—that had gone twice to and fro.

What spot had they chosen for the scene of their clandestine encounter?

A sudden apprehension seized upon the spy. She might lose sight of them; and then they would enjoy their meeting in secret and uninterrupted. By Heavens, that must not be! Her spirit, now roused to the extreme pitch of jealousy, cared not for consequences. End as the scene might, she was resolved on its interruption.

The only chance of discovering the place of assignation would be to keep Kate Vaughan in sight. Perhaps Herbert was already there waiting for her? He would be there. The lover is always first upon the ground!

Obedient to this thought, the Jewess rushed back across the platform; and once more directed her glance down the mountain.

She saw what she looked for: the snow-white snood, easily distinguishable among the dark-green foliage—now hidden as the wearer walked under the tall trees—again appearing at the open angles where the road zigzagged.

Most of the path could be seen from the summit of the rock : for, although rarely used, it had once been cleared by the axe, and formed an open tract through the timber, narrow, but perceptible from above.

Judith, still marking the movements of the kerchief, swept the path with her glance and her glass—up to the point where it reached the base of the rock and ran round to the rear. Repeatedly she scanned the track, far in advance of the climber, expecting to see some one appear—Herbert Vaughan, of course.

If aught showed among the trees—a bird fluttering in the foliage, frayed by the approach of the gentle intruder—the heart of the jealous Jewess experienced a fresh spasm of pain. Though certain she was soon to see it, she dreaded to behold the first blush of that clandestine encounter. To see them come together, perhaps rush into each other's arms, their lips meeting in the kiss of mutual love—oh, agony unendurable !

As she surmised the scene before her fancy, for a moment her proud spirit shrank, quailed, and cowed within her, and her form of bold, noble development shook like a fragile reed.

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Up the steep, with springy step, climbed the young creole, lightly as a bird upon the wing, unconscious that she was observed, and, of all others, by the rival she had most reason to dread.

After completing the numerous windings of the path, she at length arrived within some twenty paces of the rock—where the road turned round to the rear. She knew the way; and, without pausing, kept on till she stood within the *embouchure* of the sloping ravine.

Up to this point the Jewess had marked her every movement, watching her along the way. Not without some surprise had she perceived her intention to climb the Jumbé Rock—which by the direction she had taken was now evident.

The surprise soon passed, however, with a quick reflection. The summit of the rock—that place already hallowed by a love scene—was the spot chosen for the meeting!

On discovering Kate's determination to ascend the rock, which she had now divined by seeing her pass round to the rear, the Jewess stayed no longer upon the platform. That would have necessarily led to an en-

counter between the two. Not that Judith would have shunned it, however awkward, however *contra-tiempo*.

It was not from any feeling of delicacy that she determined on leaving the place; on the contrary, the action that followed betrayed a motive of a very opposite character.

Just where the ravine debouched upward on the platform, a lateral cleft opened to one side. Its bottom was but a few feet below the summit level; covered with a thick growth of evergreen bushes, whose tops, rising to an equal height with the table above, completely filled the hollow with their dense frondage.

The quick eye of Judith Jessuron at once detected the convenience of this covert. There concealed, she could see without being seen. From under the grim shadow of those dark evergreens, she could behold what was like enough to wring her heart: though she was now reckless of the result.

Watching her opportunity—when the eyes of the young creole were turned downwards—she glided into the lateral ravine, and concealed herself behind the curtain of leaves. Cowering within the covert, she awaited the ascent of her rival.

Amidst the tumult of her emotions, there was no chance to reason calmly. Suspicion of Herbert's perfidy—for it is not to be denied that the young man had shown her attentions, or, at all events, had passively permitted her to think so—suspicion of his faithlessness had now become certainty. There could be no mistake about the intended meeting between him and his cousin—at least, so Judith, blinded by her passions, believed.

There was Kate coming upon the ground, and Herbert—he would soon be after ! Strange, he had not arrived first ! But that had not much significance. He could not be far off ; and, no doubt, would be there in good time—perhaps, overtake his sweetheart ere she could reach the summit of the rock ?

Thus ran the reflections of the rival.

She listened for Herbert's voice—expecting every moment to hear him hailing from below.

She cast listless glances down the ravine, in the belief she should presently see him following frantically upon the footsteps of his cousin, and chiding himself for not being foremost at the tryst.

CHAPTER XIV.

A FELL PURPOSE DEFEATED.

JUDITH had as yet traced out no definite plan of action—trusting to circumstances to suggest what course she should pursue.

Only on one thing had she come to a determination—to permit both to pass up on the rock before showing herself.

She resolved, as long as possible, to restrain her instinct of revenge. She would see them meet—be witness of their mutual endearments—be sure of it; and then would be her time to launch forth into the full torrent of recrimination.

Something of this kind was the course she had shaped out for herself—still but vaguely, still dependent on chance.

The young creole, little suspecting the proximity of her spiteful rival, ascended the ravine—close passing the spot where the latter was concealed. Altogether unconscious of being observed, she stepped lightly upon the plat-

form; and, crossing over, stopped near the opposite edge—precisely upon the spot where she had stood during the eclipse, hallowed by such sweet remembrance.

Undoing the slight knot that had confined the kerchief under her chin, and holding it in both hands, so as to shade her eyes from the sun, she stood for some time gazing into the valley below—not the one where lay the mansion of her father, but that in which dwelt a relative still dearer. As before, her eyes were bent upon the penn—that sombre pile which, despite the dim shadows that surrounded it, seemed to her the brightest spot upon the earth. The sun in the sky above was nothing in brightness to the light that circled there—the light of Herbert's love. What would she not have given to have lived in that light? What to have been that favourite who now basked in it?

“Would that I could see him once again,” she murmured, “before that hour when we must meet no more: for then even the thought would be a crime! If I could only see him once—only speak with him, I feel as if I should tell him all. Though he cannot love me, I am sure he would pity me. Even that,

it seems to me, would soothe—it could not cure. Oh! why did he, upon this very spot—why those glances I can never forget? I can see them now—his eyes as they were then, gazing into mine, as if something passed between us—something that sank into the very depths of my soul. Oh! Herbert! why did you so regard me? But for that it might have passed. But now—never! Ah, Herbert! Herbert!”

In her anguish the young creole pronounced the last words aloud.

Only the name was heard by Judith Jesuron; but they fell upon her ear with fearful effect, piercing through her heart like a poisoned arrow. If she had any doubts about the purpose of Kate's presence, that word had decided them. The creole had now declared it with her own tongue!

On the instant a thought, dread and dire, commenced taking shape in the heart of the jealous woman. She felt her bosom stirred to a purpose bold and black as hell itself.

That purpose was nothing less than the destruction of her rival—the death of Kate Vaughan!

The circumstances suggested the mode. The

young creole was standing upon the escarpment of the cliff—scarce three feet from its edge. A slight push from behind would project her into eternity!

Not much risk either in the committal of the crime. The bushes below would conceal her body—at least, for a length of time; and, when found, what would be the verdict? What could it be, but *felo-de-se*?

The circumstances would give colour to this surmise. Even her own father might fancy it, as the consequence of his forcing her to be wedded against her will. Besides, had she not stolen surreptitiously from the house, taking advantage of an opportunity when no eye was upon her?

Other circumstances equally favoured the chances of safety. No one seemed to know that Kate had come up to the Jumbé Rock; and not a soul could be aware that she, Judith, was there: for she had neither passed nor met anyone by the way.

No eye was likely to be witness of the act. Even though the forms of the actors might be descried from the valley below, it would be at too great a distance for anyone to distinguish the character of the proceeding.

Besides, it was one chance in a thousand if any eye should be accidentally turned towards the summit of the mountain. At that hour the black labourers in the fields were too busy with their task to be allowed the freedom of gazing idly upon the Jumbé Rock.

With a fearful rapidity coursed these thoughts through the mind of the intending murderess—each adding fresh strength to her horrible purpose, and causing it to culminate towards the point of execution.

Her jealousy had long since become a strong passion, to which she had freely abandoned her soul. Already was it yearning for revenge; and now that an opportunity seemed to offer for gratifying it, she could no longer restrain herself. The chance was too tempting—the demoniac desire became uncontrollable.

Casting a glance down the ravine to make sure that no one came that way, and another towards Kate to see that her face was still turned away, Judith stole softly out of the bushes and mounted upon the rock.

Silently, as treads the tigress approaching her prey, did she advance across the platform towards the spot where stood her intended

victim, utterly unconscious of the dread danger that was so nigh.

Was there no voice to warn her?

There was—the voice of Smythje!

“Aw-haw, deaw Kate! that yaw up there on the wock! Aw, ba Jawve! what a pwe-cious chase aw’ve had aftaw yaw! There isn’t a bweath left in my body! Haw! haw!”

Judith heard the voice, and, like a cheated tigress, was about to retreat to her lair, when Kate, half facing about, compelled her to keep her ground. With the suddenness of a thought she had changed her terrific attitude, and, as the eyes of the creole rested upon her, she was standing with her arms hanging negligently downward, in the position of one who had just stepped forward upon the spot.

Kate beheld her with surprise, not unmingled with alarm; for the wild look that still lingered in the eye of the disappointed and balked murderess could not escape observation.

Before either could say a word, the voice of Smythje was again heard speaking from below.

“Deaw queetyaw, I am coming! Aw shall pwesently be up,” continued he; his voice, constantly changing its direction, proclaiming

that he continued to advance round the rock towards the ravine in the rear.

"I beg your pardon, Miss Vaughan," said the Jewess, with a sweeping curtsey and a cynical glance towards Kate; "most emphatically I beg your pardon. The second time I have intruded upon you in this delightful place! I assure you my presence here is altogether an accident; and, to prove that I have no desire to interfere, I shall bid you a very good morning!"

So saying, the daughter of Jacob Jessuron turned towards the downward path, and had disappeared from the platform before Kate could command words to express either her astonishment or indignation.

"Ba Jaw-aw-ve!" gasped Smythje, breathless, on reaching the platform. "Had yaw company up heaw? Shawly aw saw some one gawing out fwom the wavine—a lady in a widing dwess!"

"Miss Jessuron has been here."

"Aw, Miss Jessuwon—that veway wemarkable queetyaw! Gawing to be mawied to the—yaw cousin, 'tis repawted. Ba Jawve, she'll make the young fellow a fine wife, if she dawn't want too much of haw awn way.

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Haw! haw! what do yaw think about it, deaw Kate?"

"I have no thoughts about it, Mr. Smythje. Pray let us return home."

Smythje might have noticed, though without comprehending it, the anguished tone in which these words were uttered.

"Aw, veway well. A'm weady to go back. But, deaw Kate, what a womp yaw are, to be shawr! Yaw thought to pway me a twick, like the young bwide in the 'Misletaw Bough.' Haw! haw! veway amusing! Nevaw mind! Yaw are not so unfawtunate as that fair queetyaw was. I saw yawr white scarf amid the gween twees, and that guided me to yaw seqwet hiding-place. Haw! haw!"

Little suspected Smythje how very near had been his affianced to a fate as unfortunate as that of the bride of Lovel—as little as Kate that Smythje had been her preserver.

CHAPTER XV.

CYNTHIA'S REPORT.

CYNTHIA was not slow in responding to the summons of the Jew, who possessed an influence over her which, if not so powerful, was also less mysterious than that wielded by the myal-man, since it was the power of *money*. The mulatta liked money, as most people do, and for the same reason as most—because it afforded the means for indulging in dissipation, which with Cynthia was a habit.

Very easily did she find an opportunity for paying a visit to the penn—the more easily that her master was absent. But even had he been at home, she would have had but little difficulty in framing an excuse, or, rather, she would have gone without one.

In the days of which we write, slavery had assumed a very altered phase in the West Indies—more especially in the Island of Jamaica. The voices of Wilberforce and Clarkson had already reached the remotest

corners of the Island, and the plantation negroes were beginning to hear the first mutterings of the emancipation. The slave trade was doomed; and it was expected that the doom of slavery itself would soon be declared.

The black bondsmen had become emboldened by the prospect; and there was no longer that abject submission to the wanton will of the master, and the whip of the driver, which had existed of yore. It was not uncommon for slaves to take "leave of absence" without asking it—often remaining absent for days; returning without fear of chastisement, and sometimes staying away altogether. Plantation revolts had become common, frequently ending in incendiarism and other scenes of the most sanguinary character; and more than one band of "runaways" had established themselves in the remote fastnesses of the mountains; where, in defiance of the authorities, and despite the preventive service—somewhat negligently performed by their prototypes, the Maroons—they preserved a rude independence, partly sustained by pilfering, and partly by freebooting of a bolder kind. These runaways were, in effect, playing a *rôle*, in com-

plete imitation of what, at an earlier period, had been the *métier* of the original Maroons; while, as already stated, the Maroons themselves, employed upon the sage but infamous principle of "set a thief to catch a thief," had now become the detective police of the Island.

Under such conditions of slavery, the bold Cynthia was not the woman to trouble herself about asking leave of absence, nor to be deterred by any slight circumstance from taking it; therefore, at an early hour of the day, almost on the heels of Blue Dick, the messenger, she made her appearance at the penn.

Her conference with Jessuron, though it threw no light either on the whereabouts of the missing book-keeper, or on the cause of his absence, was not without interest to the Jew, since it revealed facts that gave him some comfort.

He had already learnt from Blue Dick that the Custos had started on his journey, and from Cynthia he now ascertained the additional fact, that before starting he *had taken the spell*. It had been administered in his *stirrup-cup* of "swizzle."

This intelligence was the more gratifying,

in view of the apprehensions which the Jew was beginning to feel in regard to his Spanish *employés*. If the spell should do its work as quickly as Chakra had said, these worthies would be anticipated in the performance of their dangerous duty.

Another important fact was communicated by Cynthia. She had seen Chakra that morning—just after her master had taken his departure. There had been an arrangement between her and the myal-man to meet at their usual trysting-place—contingent on the setting out of the Custos. As this contingency had transpired, of course the meeting had taken place—its object being that Cynthia might inform Chakra of such events as might occur previous to the departure.

Cynthia did not know for certain that Chakra had followed the Custos. The myal-man had not told her of his intention to do so. But she fully believed he had. Something he had let fall during their conference guided her to this belief. Besides, on leaving her, Chakra, instead of returning towards his haunt in the Duppy's Hole, had gone off along the road in the direction of Savanna.

This was the substance of Cynthia's report ;

and having been well rewarded for the communication, the mulatta returned to Mount Welcome.

Notwithstanding the gratification which her news afforded, it was far from tranquillizing the spirit of Jacob Jessuron.

The absence of Herbert Vaughan still continued—still unexplained; and as the hours passed and night drew near, without any signs of his return, Jessuron—and it may be said Judith as well—became more and more uneasy about his disappearance.

Judith was puzzled as well as pained. Her suspicion that Herbert had had an appointment with his cousin Kate had been somewhat shaken, by what she had seen—as well as what she had *not* seen: for on leaving the Jumbé Rock she had not ridden directly home. Instead of doing so, she had lingered for a length of time around the summit of the mountain, expecting Herbert to show himself. As she had neither encountered him, nor any traces of him, she was only too happy to conclude that her surmises about the meeting were, after all, but fancy; and that no assignation had been intended. Kate's coming up to the Jumbé Rock was a little queer; but

then Smythje had followed her, and Judith had not heard that part of the conversation which told that *his* being there was only an accident—the accident of having discovered the retreat to which the young creole had betaken herself.

These considerations had the effect of soothing the jealous spirit of the Jewess; but only to a very slight extent: for Herbert's absence was ominous—the more so, thought Judith, as she remembered a conversation that had lately passed between them.

Nor did she feel any repentance for the dark deed she had designed, and would certainly have executed, but for the well-timed appearance of Smythje upon the scene. The words which had fallen from the lips of Kate Vaughan had been a sufficient clue to her reflections; and though he whose name she had mentioned was not present in person, the Jewess did not doubt that he, and only he, was the subject of that soliloquy.

There might have been remorse for the deed, had it been accomplished; but there was no repentance for the design. Jealousy, bitter as ever in the breast of Judith, forbade this.

Judith's return did not make the matter

any clearer to Jessuron. She had no story to tell, except that which she deemed it more prudent to keep to herself. Her not having encountered Herbert during her ride, only rendered his absence more difficult of explanation.

CHAPTER XVI.

A DAY OF CONJECTURES.

TOWARDS sunset a fresh inspection was made of the tracks, Jessuron going in person to examine them. The skilled herdsman was again questioned; and on this occasion a fresh fact was elicited; or rather a conjecture, which the man had not made before, since he had not noticed the circumstance on which he rested it.

It was some peculiarity in the sole of the shoe that had made the strange track, and which guided the herdsman to guess who was the owner. In scouring the forest-paths in search of his cattle, he had observed that foot-mark before, or one very like it.

“If’t be de same, massa,” remarked he, in reply to the cross-questioning of the Jew, “den I knows who owns dat fut. It ’longs to that ere cappen of Maroons.”

“Cubina?”

“Ah—that’s jest the berry man.”

The Jew listened to this conjecture with marked inquietude; which was increased as another circumstance was brought to his knowledge: that Quaco the Maroon—who had been arrested along with Herbert on the day of his first appearance at the penn—had been lately seen in communication with the latter, and apparently in a clandestine manner. Blue Dick was the authority for this piece of incidental intelligence.

The penn-keeper’s suspicions had pointed to Cubina at an earlier hour of the day. These circumstances strengthened them.

It needed but another link to complete the chain of evidence, and this was found in the tobacco-pipe left in the hammock: a rather unique implement, with an iron bowl, and a stem made out of the shankbone of an ibis.

On being shown the pipe, the herdsman recognized it on sight. It was the “cutty” of Captain Cubina. More than once had he met the Maroon with the identical instrument between his teeth.

Jessuron doubted no longer that Cubina had been the abductor of his book-keeper. Nor Judith, either: for the Jewess had taken

part in the analytical process that guided to this conclusion.

Judith was rather gratified at the result. She was glad it was no worse. Perhaps, after all, the young Englishman had only gone on a visit to the Maroon, with whom she knew him to be acquainted: for Judith had been informed of all the circumstances connected with their first encounter. What was more natural than a sort of attachment between them, resulting from such an odd introduction? Curiosity may have induced Herbert to accompany the Maroon to his mountain home; and this was sufficient to explain his absence.

True, there were circumstances not so easily explained. The presence of the Maroon at the penn—his track twice to and fro—the hurried departure of Herbert, without any previous notice either to herself or to her father—all these circumstances were suspicious; and the spirit of the jealous Judith, though partially tranquillized by a knowledge of the new facts that had come to light, was, nevertheless, not quite relieved from its perplexity.

The same knowledge had produced an effect

on the spirit of her worthy parent altogether different. So far from being gratified by the idea that his book-keeper was in the company of the Maroon captain, he was exceedingly annoyed by it. He at once remembered how pointedly Herbert had put certain questions to him, in relation to the fate of the flogged runaway—the prince. He remembered, also, his own evasive answers; and he now foresaw, that in the case of the questioner being in the company of Cubina, the latter would give him a very different account of the transaction—in fact, such a statement as could not fail to bring about the most crooked consequences.

Once in possession of those damning facts, the young Englishman—of whose good moral principles the old Jew had become cognizant—would be less likely to relish him, Jessuron, for a father-in-law. Such an awkward affair coming to his knowledge might have the effect, not only to alienate his much-coveted friendship—his equally-solicited love—but to drive him altogether from a house, whose hospitality he might deem suspicious.

Was it possible that this very result had already arisen? Was the whole scheme of the

penn-keeper to prove a failure? Had murder—the blackest of all crimes—been committed in vain?

There was but little doubt left on the mind of Jacob Jessuron that the deed was now done. Whether by the poison of Chakra, or the steel of the *caçadores*, so far as the Custos himself was concerned, that part of the programme would, by this time, be complete; or so near its completion, that no act of the instigator could stay its execution.

How, when, and where was it done? And had it been done in vain?

During the early part of that same night—and on through the midnight hours—thus interrogatively reflected the Jew.

He slept not; or only in short spells of unquiet slumber, taken in his chair—as on the night before, in the open verandah. It was care, not conscience, that kept him awake—apprehension of the future, rather than remorse for the past.

After midnight, and near morning, a thought became uncontrollable—a desire to be satisfied, if not about the last of these interrogatories, at least in relation to the former.

In all likelihood Chakra would, by that time, have returned?—would be found in his lair in the Duppy's Hole?

Why he had followed the Custos, Jessuron could not tell. He could only guess at the motive. Perhaps he, Chakra, was in fear that his spell might not be sufficient; and, failing, he might find an opportunity to strengthen it? Or, was it that he wished to be witness to the final scene? to exult over his hated enemy in the last hour of life?

Knowing, as the Jew did, the circumstances that had long existed between the two men—their mutual malice—Chakra's deadly purposes of vengeance—this conjecture was far from improbable.

It was the true one; though he also gave thought to another—that perhaps the myalman had followed his victim for the purpose of *plundering him*.

To ascertain that he had succeeded in the preliminary step—that of murdering him—the Jew forsook his chair couch; and, having habited himself for a nocturnal excursion, proceeded in the direction of the Duppy's Hole.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE SICK TRAVELLER.

AFTER passing beyond the precincts of his own plantation, and traversing for some distance a by-road known as the Carrion Crow, Mr. Vaughan at length reached the main highway, which runs between Montego Bay on the north and Savanna-la-Mer on the southern side of the Island.

Here, facing southward, he continued his route—Savanna-la-Mer being the place where he intended to terminate his journey on horseback. Thence he could proceed by sea to the harbour of Kingston, or the Old Harbour, or some other of the ports having easy communication with the capital.

The more common route of travel from the neighbourhood of Montego Bay to Spanish Town, when it is desired to make the journey by land, is by the northern road to Falmouth Harbour, and thence by St. Ann's, and across

the Island. The southern road is also travelled at times, without the necessity of going to the port of Savanna, by Lacovia, and the parish of St. Elizabeth. But Mr. Vaughan preferred the easier mode of transit—on board ship; and knowing that coasting vessels were at all times trading from Savanna to the ports on the southern side, he anticipated no difficulty in obtaining a passage to Kingston. This was one reason why he directed his course to the seaport of Savanna.

He had another motive for visiting this place, and one that influenced him to an equal or greater extent. Savanna-la-Mer, as already stated, was the *assize town* of the western district of the Island—otherwise the county of Cornwall—including under its jurisdiction the five great parishes of St. James, Hanover, Westmoreland, Trelawney, and St. Elizabeth, and consequently the town of Montego Bay. Thus constituted, Savanna was the seat of justice, where all complaints of importance must be preferred. The process which Mr. Vaughan was about to institute against the Jew was one for the consideration of a full court of assize. A surreptitious seizure of twenty-four slaves was no small matter; and the charge would

amount to something more than that of mere malversation.

Loftus Vaughan had not yet decided on the exact terms in which the accusation was to be made; but the assize town being not only the seat of justice, but the head-quarters of the legal knowledge of the county, he anticipated finding there the counsel he required.

This, then, was his chief reason for travelling to Spanish Town *viá* Savanna-la-Mer.

For such a short distance—a journey that might be done in a day—a single attendant sufficed. Had he designed taking the land route to the capital, then it would have been different. Following the fashion of the Island, a troop of horses, with a numerous escort of servants, would have accompanied the great Custos.

* * * * *

The day turned out to be one of the hottest, especially after the hour of noon; and the concentrated rays of the sun, glaring down upon the white chalky road, over which the traveller was compelled to pass, rendered the journey not only disagreeable, but irksome.

Added to this, the Custos, not very well on leaving home, had been getting worse

every hour. Notwithstanding the heat, he was twice attacked by a severe chill—each time succeeded by its opposite extreme of burning fever, accompanied by thirst that knew no quenching. These attacks had also for their concomitants bitter nausea, vomiting, and a tendency towards cramp, or *tetanus*.

Long before night, the traveller would have stopped—had he found a hospitable roof to shelter him. In the early part of the day he had passed through the more settled districts of the country, where plantations were numerous; but then, not being so ill, he had declined making halt—having called only at one or two places to obtain drink, and replenish the water canteen carried by his attendant.

It was only late in the afternoon that the symptoms of his disease became specially alarming; and then he was passing through an uninhabited portion of the country—a wild corner of Westmoreland parish, where not a house was to be met with for miles along the highway.

Beyond this tract, and a few miles further on the road, he would reach the grand sugar estate of Content. There he might anticipate

a distinguished reception; since the proprietor of the plantation, besides being noted for his profuse hospitality, was his own personal friend.

It had been the design of the traveller, before starting out, to make Content the half-way house of his journey, by stopping there for the night. Still desirous of carrying out this design, he pushed on, notwithstanding the extreme debility that had seized upon his frame, and which rendered riding upon horseback an exceedingly painful operation. So painful did it become, that every now and then he was compelled to bring his horse to a halt, and remain at rest, till his nerves acquired strength for a fresh spell of exertion.

Thus delayed, it was sunset when he came in sight of Content. He did get sight of it from a hill, on the top of which he had arrived just as the sun was sinking into the Caribbean Sea, over the far headland of Point Negree. In a broad valley below, filled with the purple haze of twilight, he could see the planter's dwelling, surrounded by its extensive sugar-works, and picturesque rows of negro cabins, so near that he could distinguish the din of industry and the hum of cheerful

voices, borne upward on the buoyant air ; and could see the forms of men and women, clad in their light-coloured costumes, flitting in mazy movement about the precincts of the place.

The Custos gazed upon the sight with dizzy glance. The sounds fell confusedly on his ear. As the shipwrecked sailor who sees land without the hope of ever reaching it, so looked Loftus Vaughan upon the valley of Content. For any chance of his reaching it that night, without being carried thither, there was none : no more than if it had been a hundred miles distant—at the extreme end of the Island. He could ride no further. He could no longer keep the saddle ; and, slipping out of it, he tottered into the arms of his attendant !

Close by the road-side, and half hidden by the trees, appeared a hut—surrounded by a kind of rude inclosure, that had once been the garden or “ provision ground ” of a negro. Both hut and garden were ruinate—the former deserted, the latter overgrown with that luxuriant vegetation which, in tropic soil, a single season suffices to bring forth.

Into this hovel the Custos was conducted ;

or rather carried : for he was now unable even to walk.

A sort of platform, or *banquette*, of bamboos—the usual couch of the negro cabin—stood in one corner : a fixture seldom or never removed on the abandonment of such a dwelling. Upon this the Custos was laid, with a horse-blanket spread beneath, and his camlet cloak thrown over him.

More drink was administered ; and then the attendant, by command of the invalid himself, mounted one of the horses, and galloped off to Content.

Loftus Vaughan was alone !

CHAPTER XVIII.

A HIDEOUS INTRUDER.

LOFTUS Vaughan was not long alone, though the company that came first to intrude on the solitude that surrounded him was such as no man, either living or dying, would desire to see by his bedside.

The black groom had galloped off for help ; and ere the sound of his horse's hoofs had ceased to reverberate through the unclayed chinks of the cabin, the shadow of a human form, projected through the open doorway, was flung darkly upon the floor.

The sick man, stretched upon the cane couch, was suffering extreme pain, and giving way to it by incessant groaning. Nevertheless, he saw the shadow as it fell upon the floor ; and this, with the sudden darkening of the door, admonished him that someone was outside, and about to enter.

It might be supposed that the presence of any living being would at that moment have

pleased him—as a relief to that lugubrious loneliness that surrounded him; and perhaps the presence of a living being would have produced that effect. But in that shadow which had fallen across the floor, the sick man saw, or fancied he saw, the form of one who should have been long since dead—the form of Chakra the myal-man!

The shadow was defined and distinct. The hut faced westward. There were no trees before the door—nothing to intercept the rays of the now sinking sun, that covered the ground with a reddish glare—nothing save that sinister *silhouette* which certainly seemed to betray the presence of Chakra. Only the upper half of a body was seen—a head, shoulders, and arms. In the shadow, the head was of gigantic size—the mouth open, displaying a serrature of formidable teeth—the shoulders, surmounted by the hideous hump—the arms long and ape-like! Beyond doubt was it either the shadow of Chakra, or a duplication of his ghost—of late so often seen!

The sick man was too terrified to speak—too horrified to think. It scarce added to his agony when, instead of his shadow, the myal-man himself, in his own proper and hideous

aspect, appeared within the doorway, and without pause stepped forward upon the floor!

Loftus Vaughan could no longer doubt the identity of the man who had made this ill-timed intrusion. Dizzy though his sight was, from a disordered brain, and dim as it had been rapidly becoming, it was yet clear enough to enable him to see that the form which stood before him was no phantasy—no spirit of the other world, but one of this—one as wicked as could well be found amid the phalanx of the fiends of darkness.

He had no longer either fancy or fear about Chakra's ghost. It was Chakra's self he saw—an apparition far more to be dreaded.

The scream that escaped from the lips of Loftus Vaughan announced the climax of his horror. On uttering it, he made an effort to rise to his feet, as if with the intention of escaping from the hut; but finally overpowered by his own feebleness, and partly yielding to a gesture of menace made by the myal-man—and which told him that his retreat was intercepted—he sank back upon the *banquette* in a paralysis of despair. .

“Ha!” shouted Chakra, as he placed himself between the dying man and the door. “No use fo’ try ’scape! no use wha’somdever! Ef ye wa’ able get ’way from hya, you no go fur. ’Fore you walk hunder yard you fall down, in you track, like new-drop calf. No use, you ole fool. Whugh!”

Another shriek was the only reply which the enfeebled man could make.

“Ha! ha! ha!” vociferated Chakra, showing his shark-like teeth in a fiendish laugh. “Ha! ha! ha! Skreek away, Cussus Va’ghan! Skreek till you bust you windpipe. Chakra tell you it no use. De death ’pell am ’pon you—it am *in* you—an’ jess when dat ar sun hab cease shine upon de floor, you go join you two brodder jussuses in de oder world, wha’ you no fine buckra no better dan brack man. Dey gone afore. Boaf go by de death ’pell. Chakra send you jess de same; only he you keep fo’ de lass, ’kase you de grann Cussus, an’ he keep him bess victim fo’ de lass. De Debbil him better like dat way.”

“Mercy, mercy!” shrieked the dying man.

“Ha! ha! ha!” scornfully answered Chakra.

“Wha’ fo’ you cry ‘mercy?’ D’you gib mercy to de ole myal-man, when you ’im chain up dar to de cabbage-tree? You show no mercy den—Chakra show none now. You got die!”

“Oh! Chakra! good Chakra!” cried the Custos, raising himself upon the couch, and extending his arms in a passionate appeal. “Save me! save my life! and I will give you whatever you wish—your freedom—money——”

“Ha!” interrupted Chakra, in a tone of triumphant exultation. “Gib me freedom, would you? You gib me dat arready. You money dis hya nigga doan’ care ’bout—not de shell ob a cocoa. He hab plenty money; he get wha’ he want fo’ de lub spell and de death ’pell. Whugh! De only ting you hab dat he care ’bout, you no can gib. Chakra take dat ’ithout you gibbin.”

“What?” mechanically asked the dying man, fixing his eyes upon the face of Chakra with a look of dread import.

“Lilly Quasheba!” cried the monster, in a loud voice, and leering horridly as he pronounced the name. “Lilly Quasheba!” he repeated, as if doubly to enjoy the fearful effect

which his words were producing. "De dawter ob de quaderoom! Da's only fair, Cussus," continued he, in a mocking tone. "You had de modder yourseff—dat is, affter de Maroon! You know dat! It am only turn an' turn 'bout. Now you go die, Chakra he come in fo' de dawter. Ha! ha! ha!

"Whugh!" he exclaimed, suddenly changing his tone, and bending down over the form of the Custos, now prostrate upon the couch. "Whugh! I b'lieve de buckra gone dead!"

He was dead. On hearing the name "Lilly Quasheba," accompanied by such a fearful threat, a wild cry had escaped from his lips. It was the last utterance of his life. On giving tongue to it, he had fallen back upon the bamboo bedstead, mechanically drawing the cloak over his face, as if to shut out some horrid sight; and while the myal-man, gloating over him, was endeavouring to procrastinate his pangs, the poison had completed its purpose.

Chakra, extending one of his long arms, raised the fold from off his face; and holding it up, gazed for a moment upon the features of his hated foe, now rigid, blanched, and bloodless.

Then, as if himself becoming frightened at the form and presence of death, the savage miscreant dropped the cover quickly to its place ; rose from his stooping position ; and stole stealthily from the hut.

CHAPTER XIX.

TWO SPECULATIVE TRAVELLERS.

THE sun was sinking out of sight into the bosom of the blue Caribbean, and the twilight, long since extended over the valley below, was now spreading its purple robe around the summit of the hill, on which stood the hut. The shadows cast by the huge forest trees were being exchanged for the more sombre shadows of the coming night; and the outlines of the hovel—now a house of death—were gradually becoming obliterated in the crepusculous obscurity.

Inside that deserted dwelling, tenanted only by the dead, reigned stillness, solemn and profound—the silence of death itself.

Outside, were sounds such as suited the solemnity of the scene: the mournful *loo-who-ah* of the eared owl, who had already commenced quartering the aisles of the forest; while from the heaven above came the wild wail of the

potoo, as the bird went across the fast-darkening sky, in search of its insect prey.

To these lugubrious utterances there was one solitary exception. More cheerful was the champing of the steel bit—proceeding from the horse that had been left tied to the tree—and the quick, impatient stroke of his hoof, as the animal fretted under the stings of the musquitoes, becoming more bitter as the darkness descended.

The body of Loftus Vaughan lay upon the bamboo bedstead, just as Chakra had left it. No hand had been there to smooth that rude pillow—no friendly finger to close those eyes that were open, and saw not—those orbs glassed and coldly glaring from their sunken sockets !

As yet the attendant had not returned with that succour which would come too late.

Nor was it possible for him to get back in much less than an hour. Content, though in actual distance scarcely a mile from the hut, was full five in point of time. The slope of the mountain road was at an angle with the horizon of at least fifty degrees. There could be no rapid riding on that road—neither up nor down, upon the most urgent errand ; and

the black groom was not going to risk life by a broken neck, even to save the life of a Custos.

It would be a full hour, then, before the man would return. As yet only twenty minutes had passed, and forty more were to come.

But it was not fated that even for those forty minutes the body of the Custos Vaughan should be permitted to rest in peace.

Twenty minutes had scarcely elapsed after Chakra had stolen away from the side of the corpse, when there came others to disturb it, and with a rude violence almost sufficient to arouse it from the slumber of death !

Had Chakra, on leaving the hut, only taken the main road back to Montego Bay—and that was the direction in which he intended going—he would have met two strange men. Not so strange but that they were known to him ; but strange enough to arrest the attention of an ordinary traveller.

But among the proclivities of the myalman, that of travelling along *main roads* was one in which he did not indulge, except under the most unavoidable circumstances.

Following his usual practice, as soon as he

had cleared the precincts of the negro cabin, he struck off into a by-path leading through the bushes; and by so doing lost the opportunity of an encounter with two individuals, who, although of a different nationality, were as great villains as himself.

The brace of worthies thus described are already known. They were the man-hunters of Jacob Jessuron, Manuel and Andres—*caçadores de cimmarones* from the Island of Cuba.

With the object for which they were journeying along the Savanna road the reader is equally *au fait*. Jessuron's talk with them, on starting them off, has plainly proclaimed the vile intent of his two truculent tools.

All day long had these human bloodhounds been following upon the track of the Custos—now nearer to him—now further off—according to the halts which the traveller had made, and the relative speed of horseman and pedestrian.

More than once had they sighted their intended victim afar off on the white dusty road. But the presence of the stout negro attendant, as well as the broad open daylight,

had deterred them from proceeding in their nefarious purpose; and they had postponed its execution till that time which gives opportunity to the assassin—the going down of the sun.

This hour had at length arrived; and just as the real murderer was hastening away from the hut, the intending assassins were hurrying towards it, with all the speed in their power!

“*Carrambo!*” exclaimed he who was the older, and in consequence the *leader* of the two, “I shouldn’t be surprised, Andres, if the *ingeniero* was to slip out of our clutches to-night! Not far beyond lies Content, and the owner of that *ingenio* is a friend of his. You remember Señor Jacob said he would be like to put up there for the night?”

“Yes,” replied Andres, “the old Judio was particular about that.”

“Well, if he gets there before we can overhaul him, there’ll be nothing done to-night. We must take our chance on the road between that and Savanna.”

“*Carajo!*” responded Andres, with somewhat spiteful emphasis; “if it wasn’t for them ugly pistols he carries, and that big

buck nigger by his side, we might have stopped his breath before this. Supposing he gets to Savanna before we can have a talk with him? what then, *compadre*?"

"Then," answered he thus godfatherly addressed, "then our lines won't lie in pleasant places. Savanna's a big city; and it isn't so easy to murder a man in the street of a town as among these trees. People prowling about have tongues, where the trees haven't; and fifty pounds, Jamaica money, a'nt much for killing a man—more especially a *Custos*, as they call him. *Carajo*! we must take care, or we may get our necks twisted for this simple trick! These Custoses are like our *alcaldes*—kill one, and a dozen others will spring up to prosecute you."

"But what," inquired Andres, who, although the younger of the two, appeared to be gifted with a greater degree of prudence than his companion—"what if we don't find a chance—even in Savanna?"

"Then," replied the other, "we stand a good chance of losing our fifty pounds—shabby currency as it is."

"How that, Manuel?"

“ How that? Why, because the *ingeniero*, once in Savanna, will take ship and travel by sea. The *dueno* said so. If he do that, we may bid adieu to him ; for I wouldn’t make another sea-voyage for five times fifty pounds. That we had from Batabano was enough to last me for my life. *Carajo!* I thought it was the *vomito prieto* that had seized upon me. But for the fear of another such puking spell I’d have gone home with the rest, instead of staying in this nest of Jews and nigger-drivers ; and how I’m ever to get back to Batabano, let alone making a voyage for the purpose of——”

The Cubano refrained from finishing his speech—not from any delicacy he had about declaring the purpose, but because he knew that the declaration would be supererogatory to an associate who already comprehended it.

“ In that case,” counselled the more sagacious Andres, “ we must finish our business before Savanna comes in sight. Perhaps, *compadre*, by pushing on rapidly now, we may overtake the party before they get anchored in Content ? ”

“ You’re right, *hombre* ; you’re right about

that. Let us, as you say, push on ; and, if it suits you as it does me, let our motto be, '*Noche o nunca*' (this night or never) ! ”

“ *Vamos !* ” rejoined Andres ; and the assassins increased their speed, as if stimulated by the fear of losing their prey.

CHAPTER XX.

NO BLOOD.

THE sun had already hidden his red disc under the sea horizon, when the man-hunters mounted the hill, and approached the hut where Custos Vaughan had been compelled to make halt, and in which he was now lying lifeless.

“*Mira, Manuel!*” said Andres, as they came within sight of the hovel, and at the same instant saw the horse standing tied to the tree; “*un cavallo!* saddled, bridled, and with *alforjas!*”

“A traveller’s horse!” rejoined Manuel, “and that very traveller we’ve been tracking. Yes! it’s the horse of the great alcalde of Mount Welcome! Don’t you remember, when we saw them before us at mid-day, that one of the horses was a bay, and the other a grey? There’s the grey, and it was on that very animal the Custos was riding.”

“Quite true, *compadre*; but where’s the other?”

"Maybe among the trees, or tied round the other side of the hut. The riders must be inside."

"Both, do you think, Manuel?"

"Of course, both; though where Black-skin's horse can be is more than I can say. *Carrambo!* what's halted them here? There's nobody lives in the ranche. I know that: I came this way about a week ago and it had no tenant then. Besides, the *ingenio* where he was to put up for the night is just below. What, in the name of Saint Mary, has stopped them here?"

"*Por Dios, compadre!*" said the younger of the two *caçadores*, looking significantly at the saddle-bags still hanging over the cantle of the Custos's saddle. "There ought to be something valuable in those *alforjas?*"

"*Caval!* you're right; but we mustn't think of that just yet, *camarado!* After the other's done, then we shall have the opportunity—— I wonder whether they're both inside? It's very odd we don't see the negro's horse!"

"Ha!" rejoined Andres, apparently struck with an idea. "What if he's gone on to the plantation for some purpose? Suppose

an accident has happened to the Custos's steed, or, *carrai!* suppose he's himself taken sick? You remember the man we met, who told us about them ugly pistols—he said that one of the travellers—the white man—looked sick. Didn't the fellow say he saw him puking?"

"*Por Dios!* he did. As you say, there may be something in it. If Blackskin's out of the way, now's our time; for there is more to be feared from that big buck nigger than his master, when it comes to a struggle. If it should prove that the Custos is sick—I hope it is so—he won't be in a condition to make much use of his weapons; and *carrambo!* we must get hold of them before he knows what we're after!"

"Hadn't we better go round first?" counselled the sagacious Andres. "Let us explore the back of the hut, and see whether the other horse is there. If he's not, then certainly the negro's gone off on some errand! We can steal through the bushes to the other side, and get right up to the walls without any danger of being seen!"

"That's our plan, *camarado*. Let's lose no time, then, for, if it be so that Blackskin's

abroad, we're in luck. We mayn't find such another chance—not between here and the world's end. Follow me, *hombre!* and set down your feet as if you were stepping upon eggs with young birds in them. *Vamos!*”

So saying, the chief of the two *caçadore* skulked in among the trees, closely followed by his companion.

After making a circuit through the under-wood, the assassins stole silently in towards the back of the hovel.

They saw no other horse—only the grey, which stood tied to the tree in front. The bay was gone, and in all probability his rider. Andres already congratulated himself upon his conjecture being correct: the negro had ridden off upon some errand.

This was put beyond all doubt by their perceiving the fresh tracks of a horse, leading away from the hut along the road towards Content. The hoof-prints were so plain as to be visible at some distance. The turf on the road-edge was torn up, and deeply indented—where the negro groom had urged his horse into a gallop.

The assassins saw this, even without return.

ing to the road ; and were now satisfied that the attendant was gone away. It only remained to make sure that the traveller himself was inside the hut.

Creeping cautiously up to the wall, the *caçadores* peeped through the unclayed chinks of the cabin.

At first the darkness inside hindered them from distinguishing any object in particular. Presently, as their eyes grew more accustomed to the obscurity, they succeeded in making out the bamboo bedstead in the corner, with something that resembled the figure of a man stretched lengthwise upon it. A dark cloak covered the form, the face as well ; but the feet, booted and spurred, protruding from under the cover, told that it was a man who was lying in that outstretched attitude—the man who was to be murdered !

He appeared to be sound asleep : there was no motion perceptible—not even as much as would indicate that he breathed !

Lying on the floor, at some distance from the couch, was a hat, and beside it a pair of pistols, in their holsters—as if the traveller had unbuckled them from his belt, and flung

them down, before going to sleep. Even if awake he could scarce get hold of the pistols, before his assailants could spring upon him.

The assassins looked towards one another with a significant glance. The fates appeared to favour their attempt; and, as both on the instant were actuated by the same sanguinary instinct, they leaped simultaneously to their feet, drew their sharp *machetes*, and rushed together through the doorway.

“*Matelo! matelo!*” (kill him!) cried both, in the same voice, each with a view of encouraging the other; and, as they uttered the cruel cry, they buried the blades in the body of the unresisting traveller—stabbing it repeatedly through the cloak.

Convinced that they had finished their bloody work, the murderers were about to rush out again—probably with an eye to the saddle-bags outside, when it occurred to them as strange that the victim of their hired villany should have kept so quiet. In their frenzied excitement—while dealing what they supposed to be his death-blows—they had not stopped to notice anything odd in the behaviour of the man whom they were murdering. Now that the deed was done, and they could reflect more

coolly, a sudden surprise seized upon them—springing from the circumstance that the wretched man had made not the slightest motion—had neither stirred nor cried out! Perhaps the first stab had gone right through his heart: for it was so intended by Andres, who had given it. But even that does not produce instantaneous death, and the man-hunters knew it. Besides, on the blade of Andres' *machete*, as well as that of his comrade, *there was no blood!*

It was very strange. Could the cloak or under-garments have wiped it off? Partially they might, but not altogether! Their blades were wet, but not with blood—of that they showed scarce a stain!

"It's a queer thing, comrade," exclaimed Manuel. "I could almost fancy——*Vaya!* Lift the cloak, and let's have a look at him."

The other, stepping closer to the couch, stooped forward, and raised the fold of the camlet from the face of the murdered man.

As he did so, his hand came in contact with the cold skin, while his glance fell upon the stiffened features of a corpse—upon eyes whose dull, blank film showed that the light had long since forsaken them!

The assassin stayed not for a second look. With a cry of terror he let go the garment ; and rushed towards the door, followed by his equally terrified companion.

In another moment both would have escaped outside ; and perhaps have taken the back track, without thinking any more about the saddle-bags ; but just as Andres had set foot upon the door-sill, he saw before him something that caused him to pull up, and with a precipitancy that brought his comrade with a violent concussion against his back.

The something which had led to this sudden interruption was the presence of three men, standing in a triangular row, scarce five paces from the door. Each was holding a gun, in such position, that its dark, hollow tube was visible to the eyes of the assassin—pointing directly upon himself.

The three men were of three distinct colours—white, yellow, and black ; all three known to the man-hunter and his companion. They were Herbert Vaughan, Cubina, captain of Maroons, and Quaco, his lieutenant.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE CAPTURE OF THE CAÇADORES.

THE black, though presumedly the lowest in rank, was the first to break speech.

“No, ye don’t!” cried he, moving his musket up and down, while still keeping it levelled upon the foremost of the *caçadores*. “No, Mister Jack Spaniard, not a foot d’ you set outside that door till we see what you’ve been a-doin’ ’ithin there. Steady, now, or thar’s an ounce of lead into yer garlicky inside! Steady!”

“Surrender!” commanded Cubina, in a firm, authoritative voice, and with a threatening gesture, which, though less demonstrative than that of his lieutenant, was equally indicative of determination. “Drop your *machetes*, and yield at once! Resistance will only cost you your lives.”

“Come, my Spanish worthies,” said Herbert, “you know me! I advise you to do as you’re bid. If there’s nothing against you, I pro-

mise no harm——Ha! 'ware heels!" he continued, in sharp haste, observing that the Spaniards were looking over their shoulders, as if intending to escape by the back of the hut. "Don't attempt to run away. You'll be caught, no matter how fast you go. I've got two barrels here; and each is good for a bird on the wing. Show your backs, and they'll be preciousy peppered, I promise you."

"*Carajo!*" hissed out the older of the *caçadores*. "What do you want with us?"

"Ay!" added the other, in a tone of innocent reproach; "what have we been doing to make all this *fanfaron* about?"

"What have you been doing?" rejoined the Maroon captain: "that's just what we desire to know, and are determined upon knowing."

"There is nothing to be known," answered the man, speaking with an air of assumed simplicity; "at the least, nothing that's very particular. We were on our way to Savanna—me and my comrade here——"

"Stach yer palaver!" cried Quaco, becoming impatient, and pushing the muzzle of his musket within an inch of the Spaniard's ribs. "Did ye hear the cappen tell ye to drop yer toastin' forks and surrender? Down with

'em this minnit, I say, an' do yer jaw-waggin' atterwards ! ”

Thus threatened, either with a poke in the ribs, or, perhaps, a bullet between them, Andres sulkily let fall his *machete* upon the floor—an action that was instantly imitated by his senior and superior.

“ Now, my braves ! ” proceeded the black lieutenant, still holding his huge gun to the Spaniard's breast ; “ lest ye mout be wantin' to gie us leg-bail, you muss submit to be trussed a trifle. Down upon yer behinds, both o' ye ; and keep that way till I get the cords and skewers ready.”

The *caçadores* perfectly understood the order ; and, perceiving that there was no chance for disobedience, squatted down upon the floor—each on the spot where he had been standing.

Quaco now picked up the two *machetes*, placing them beyond the reach of their *ci-devant* owners. Then, handing his great gun over to the care of Cubina—who with Herbert was left to guard the prisoners—he walked off to a short distance among the trees.

Presently he returned, trailing after him a

long creeping plant that resembled a piece of cord, and carrying two short sticks, each about three feet in length.

All this was accomplished with as much celerity, and in as brief a space of time, as if he had simply taken the articles from an adjacent store-room.

Meanwhile, Cubina and Herbert had kept their guns still pointed upon the two *caçadores*: for it was evident that the villains were most eager to get off; and as it was now nearly night, had the least chance been allowed them, they might have succeeded in escaping through the darkness.

Their captors were determined they should have no chance: for although neither Herbert nor Cubina could see into the obscure interior of the cabin, and were as yet ignorant of the fearful spectacle that there awaited them, they had reason to suspect that the Spaniards had either intended some dark deed, or had already committed it. They had learnt something along the road of the progress of the *caçadores*, and their mode of journeying, which, to more than one whom they met, had appeared mysterious.

The horse standing tied to the tree—

caparisoned as he was for travel—that was the most suspicious circumstance of all. Though none of the three pursuers recognized the animal as belonging to Custos Vaughan, as soon as they set eyes upon it they had felt a presentiment that they had arrived too late.

The wild haste with which the Spaniards were rushing from the cabin when intercepted at the door, almost confirmed their unpleasant foreboding; and before any of the three had entered the hut, they were half prepared to find that it contained a corpse—perhaps more than one, for the disappearance of Pluto was not yet explained.

Quaco, habile in handling cordage of all kinds, more especially the many sorts of supple withes with which the trees of a Jamaica forest are laced together, soon tied the two Spaniards wrist to wrist, and ankle to ankle, as tightly as could have been done by the most accomplished gaoler. A long practice in binding runaway blacks had made Quaco an expert in that department, which, indeed, constitutes part of the professional training of a Maroon.

The captors had already entered within the cabin, now dark as death itself. For some

moments they stood upon the floor, their eyes endeavouring to read the gloom around them. Silent they stood—so still, that they could hear their own breathing, with that of the two prisoners upon the floor. At length, in the corner, they could dimly make out something like the form of a man lying stretched upon a low bedstead.

Quaco, though not without some trepidation, approached it. Stooping down, he applied his hand to it with cautious touch.

“A man!” muttered he: “eyther asleep or dead.

“Dead!” he ejaculated the instant after, as, in groping about, his fingers chanced to fall upon the chill forehead—“dead and cold!”

Cubina and Herbert stepping forward, and stooping over the corpse, verified the assertion of Quaco.

Whose body was it? It might not be that of Loftus Vaughan! It might be the black attendant, Pluto!

No! it was not a black man. It needed no light to show that. The touch of the hair was sufficient to tell that a white man lay dead upon the couch.

“Catch me one of those *cocuyos*!” said the Maroon captain, speaking to his lieutenant.

Quaco stepped outside the hut. Low down along the verge of the forest were flitting little sparks, that appeared to be a galaxy of stars in motion. These were the *lampyridæ*, or small fire-flies. It was not with these Quaco had to do. Here and there, at longer intervals, could be seen much larger sparks, of a golden green colour. It was the great winged beetle—the *cocuyo**—that emitted this lovely light.

Doffing his old hat-crown, Quaco used it as an insect-net; and, after a few strokes, succeeded in capturing a *cocuyo*.

With this he returned into the hut, and, crossing over, held it near the head of the corpse.

He did not content himself with the gold green light which the insect emits from the two eyelike tubercles on its thorax. The forest-craft of Quaco enabled him to produce a brighter and better.

Holding open the elytra with his fingers, and bending back the abdomen with his thumb, he exposed that oval disc of orange

* *Pyrophorus Nectilucus*.

light—only seen when the insect is on the wing.

A circle of a yard in diameter was illuminated by the phosphoric glow. In that circle was the face of a dead man; and sufficiently bright was the lamp of the *cocuyo*, to enable the spectators to identify the ghastly lineaments as those of the Custos Vaughan.

CHAPTER XXII.

A DOUBLE MURDER.

NONE of the three started or felt surprise. That had been gradually passing: for before this their presentiment had become almost a conviction.

Quaco simply uttered one of those exclamations that proclaim a climax; Cubina felt chagrined—disappointed in more ways than one; while Herbert gave way to grief—though less than he might have done, had his relative more deserved his sorrow.

It was natural they should inquire into the circumstances of the Custos's death. Now, firmly believing he had been murdered, and by the *caçadores*, they proceeded to make an examination of the body.

Mystery of mysteries! a dozen stabs by some sharp instrument, and no blood! Wounds through the breast, the abdomen, the heart—all clean cut punctures, and yet no gore—no extravasation!

“Who gave the stabs? you did this, you wretches!” cried Herbert, turning fiercely upon the *employés* of Jessuron.

“*Carrambo!* why should we do such a thing, master?” innocently inquired Andres. “The *alcalde* was dead before we came up.”

“Spanish palaver!” cried Quaco. “Look at these blades!” he continued, taking up the two *machetes*, “they’re wet now! ’Ta’nt blood azzactly; but somethin’——. See,” he exclaimed, holding his *cocuyo* over the wounds, and presenting one of the *machetes* to the light, “they fit to these holes like a cork to a bottle. ’Twere they that made em’, nothin’ but they, an’ you did it, ye ugly skinks!”

“By the Virgin, Señor Quaco!” replied Andres, “you wrong us. I’ll swear on the holy evangelists, *we* didn’t kill the *alcalde*—Custos, I mean. *Carrambo!* no. We were as much surprised as any of you, when we came in here and found him lying dead—just as he is now.”

There was an air of sincerity in the declaration of the wretch that rendered it difficult to believe in his guilt—that is, the guilt of him and his companion as the real murderers,

though their intention to have been so was clear enough to Cubina.

“*Crambo!* why did you stab him?” said he to the two prisoners. “You need not deny that you did that.”

“Señor capitan,” answered the crafty Andres, who in all delicate questions appeared to be spokesman, “we won’t deny that. It is true—I confess it with shame—that we did run our blades once or twice through the body.”

“A dozen times, you John Crow!” corrected Quaco.

“Well, Señor Quaco,” continued the Spaniard, “I won’t be particular about the number. There may have been a thrust or two less, or more. It was all a whim of my comrade, Manuel, here—a little bit of a wager between us.”

“A wager for what?” asked Herbert.

“Well, you see, master, we’d been journeying, as I’ve said already, to Savanna. We saw the horse tied outside this little rancho, and thought we would go in and see who was inside. *Carrambo!* what should we see but the body of a dead man lying stretched out on the bamboos! *Santissima!* *Señores*, we were as much startled as you!”

“Terribly surprised, I suppose?” sarcastically spoke Cubina.

“Nearly out of our senses, I assure you, señor.”

“Go on, you wretch!” commanded Herbert. “Let us hear what tale you have to tell.”

“Well!” said the *caçadore*, resuming his narration, “after a while we got a little over our fright—as one naturally does, you know—and then Manuel says to me, ‘Andres!’ ‘What is it, Manuel?’ said I. ‘Do you think,’ said he, ‘that blood would run out of a dead body?’ ‘Certainly not,’ said I; ‘not a drop.’ ‘I’ll bet you five pesos it will,’ challenged my *camarado*. ‘Done!’ said I; and then, to settle the thing, we—I acknowledge it—did run our *machetes* through the body of the Custos—of course, we could do him no harm then.”

“Monsters!” exclaimed Herbert; “it was almost as bad as killing him! What a horrid tale! Ha! you wretches, notwithstanding its ingenuity, it’ll not save your necks from a halter!”

“Oh, señorito,” said Andres, appealingly, “we’ve done nothing to deserve that. I can

assure you we are both right sorry for what we've done. Aint you sorry, Manuel?"

"*Carrai!* that I am," earnestly answered Manuel.

"We both regretted it afterwards," continued Andres, "and to make up for what we had done, we took the cloak and spread it decently over the body—in order that the poor alcalde should rest in peace."

"Liar!" cried Quaco, throwing the light of his *cocuyo* on the corpse. "You did no such thing; you stabbed him *through* the cloak. Look there!"

And as Quaco gave this indignant denial, he pointed to the cuts in the cloth to prove the falsehood of the Spaniard's statement.

"*Carrai-ai-i!*" stammered out the confounded Andres. "Sure enough there's a cut or two. Oh, now I recollect: we first covered him up. It was after we did that, we then made the bet—didn't we, Manuel?"

Manuel's reply was not heard: for at that instant the hoof-strokes of horses were heard in front of the hut; and the shadowy forms of two horsemen could be distinguished just outside the doorway.

It was the black groom, who had returned from Content, accompanied by the overseer of the estate.

Shortly after a number of negroes appeared on foot, carrying a stretcher.

Their purpose was to convey the sick man to Content.

Circumstances had occurred to make a change in the character of their duty.

CHAPTER XXIII.

CHAKRA ON THE BACK TRACK.

OF the three magistrates who condemned the Coromantee, one had been slumbering in his grave for six months; the second, about that number of days; and the third—the great Custos himself—was now a corpse!

Of all three had the myal-man been the murderer; though in the case of the first two there had been no suspicion of foul play, or, at least, not enough to challenge inquest or investigation. Both had died of lingering diseases, bearing a certain resemblance to each other; and though partaking very much of the nature of a wasting, intermittent fever, yet exhibiting symptoms that were new and strange—so strange as to baffle the skill of the Jamaican disciples of Esculapius.

About the death of either one Chakra had not felt the slightest apprehension—nor would he even had an investigation arisen. In neither murder had his hand appeared. Both had been

accomplished by the invisible agency of Obi, that at this period held mysterious existence on every plantation in the Island.

With the assassination of the Custos, however, it was different. Circumstances had caused that event to be hurried, and there was danger—as Chakra himself had admitted—that the spell of Obi might be mistaken for a spell of poison. A death so sudden, and by natural causes inexplicable, would, undoubtedly, provoke speculation, and lead to the opening and examining of the body.

Chakra knew that inside would be found something stronger than even the sap of the Savanna flower or the branched *calalue*; and that in all probability the malady to which the Custos had succumbed would be pronounced *murder*.

With this upon his mind, he was not without apprehension—his fears pointing to Cynthia.

Not that he suspected the *honesty* of his confederate; but only that her *consistency* might be too weak to withstand the cross-questioning of a coroner.

Fearing this, he had scarce got out of sight of the Custos's corpse before he com-

menced contriving how Cynthia's tongue could be tied—in other words, how the mulatta was to be made away with.

Upon this design his thoughts were for the moment bent.

He had less, if any, apprehension about his other accomplice in the crime. He fancied that Jessuron was himself too deeply dyed to point out the spots upon his fellow-conspirator ; and this rendered him confident of secrecy on the part of the Jew.

Neither did he dwell long upon the danger to be apprehended from Cynthia, and so trivial a matter as the silencing of her tongue soon became obliterated or blended with another and far more important project, to the execution of which he was now hastening.

On leaving the hut where lay the dead body of his victim, he had taken to by-paths and bushes. Only for a short time did he keep to these. The twilight rapidly darkening into night left the highway free to him ; and, availing himself of this privilege, he returned to it—showing by his hurried steps, as he regained the road, that he was glad to escape from a circuitous path.

His face once more set towards the Tre-

lawney hills, he walked in silence, and with a rapidity scarce credible—his long, ape-like legs, split trestle fashion to the centre of his body, enabling him to glide over the ground almost as fast as a mule could mince.

Whenever anyone appeared upon the road before him, he adopted his customary plan of betaking himself to the bushes until they had passed; but when travellers chanced to be going the same way—which more than once did happen—he avoided an encounter by making a circuit through the woods, and coming out far ahead of them.

The trouble thus taken to gain time, as well as the earnest manner with which the myalman was hastening forward, proved that the crime just committed was not the crisis of Chakra's villanies; but that some other evil purpose—to him of equal or greater import—was yet before him; and soon to be achieved, or, at least, attempted.

Following back the main route between Savanna-la-Mer and the Bay, he at length arrived at the Carrion Crow Road, and, after traversing this for some distance, came within view of the Jumbé Rock, now glancing with vitreous sheen in the clear moonlight.

Almost as soon as he had caught sight of the well-known land-mark, he forsook the road ; and struck off into a by-path that led through the woods.

This path, trending diagonally up the side of the Jumbé mountain, and passing near the base of the rock, was the same which Herbert Vaughan and the two Maroons had traversed on their way from the Happy Valley on that same morning.

Chakra, however, knew nothing of this ; nor aught either of the design or expedition of Cubina and his comrades. Equally ignorant was he of the errand on which Jessuron had dispatched his Cuban emissaries—by way of having his bow twice stringed.

The Coromantee, fancying himself the only player in that game of murder, had no idea that there were others interested in it as much as he ; and although once or twice during the day he had seen men moving suspiciously behind him along the road, it had never occurred to him who they were—much less that they had been deputed to complete his own job, should the “ spell ” fail to prove sufficiently potent.

A somewhat long *détour*—which he had taken after leaving the hut—had brought him

out on the main road behind both parties ; and thus had he remained ignorant of their proximity, at the same time that he had himself escaped the observation both of the villains who intended to assassinate the Custos, and of the men who were pressing forward to save him.

Still continuing his rapid stride, Chakra climbed the mountain slope, with the agility of one accustomed to the most difficult paths.

On arriving under the Jumbé Rock, he halted—not with any intention of remaining there, but only to consider.

He looked up towards the summit of the cliff, in whose dark shadow he was standing ; and then, raising his eyes still higher, he gazed for a short while upon the sky. His glance betrayed that interrogative scrutiny characteristic of one who, not being furnished with a watch, endeavours to ascertain the time. Chakra needed no watch. By day, the sun was sufficient to inform him of the hour ; by night the stars, which were old and familiar acquaintances.

The sinking of Orion towards the silvered surface of the sea told him that in two hours, or thereabout, no stars would be seen.

“Kupple ob hour!” muttered he, after making the observation; “woan do—woan do. By de time I get to de Duppy Hole fo’ de lamp, an’ den back to de rock fo’ fix um——It woan do! Adam an’ his men de better part ob an hour ’fore dey ked climb up hya; an’ den it be daylight. *Daat* woan do nohow. Muss be done in de night, else we git follered, an’ de Duppy Hole no longer safe ’treat fo’ Chakra. Mussent risk dat, whasomebber a do.

“Whugh!” he continued, after reflecting a moment, and with a look of villanous chagrin overspreading his countenance; “’tam a piece of cuss crooked luck fo’ me no’ be hya ’bout two hour soona. Dat ’ud ’a been s’fish-int to got ’em all up in time; an’ dar wud den a been gobs o’ time to ’complish de whole bizness.

“Nebba mind!” cried he, after a pause, and rousing himself from the attitude of reflection; “nebbamind, ye old Coromantee fool! ’morra night do jess as well. Den dar be plenty ob time. ’Taint like dey get de dead corpus ob de Cussus back to de Buff afore two, tree day; an’ ef dat ere nigga fotch de news, it do no harm. Maybe do good, in de ’fusion it make

'bout de place. Nebba mind. It be all right fo' 'morr' night. 'Fore dis time ob de mornin' de Lilly Quasheba—de beau'ful dauter ob dat proud quaderoom—she sleep in de 'brace o' ole Chakra de myal-man. Whugh!"

"Two hour 'fore day," added he, after a longer pause, in which he appeared to gloat over his fiendish expectations; "two hour. I'se jess hab time go down to de Jew penn, an' den back to de Duppy Hole 'fore daylight. Dat ole sinner, he want know what's a been done; an' a want get de balance ob dat fifty poun'. A mout stan' need ob de money, now a's a-gwine ta hab a wife, an' take to de keep-in' ob a 'tablishment. Ha! ha! ha!"

And as he gave utterance to the laugh, the prospective bridegroom once more put his hideous form in motion, and followed the path leading to the Jew's penn.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE VIGIL OF LOVE AND THE VIGIL OF JEALOUSY.

YOLA, true to her tryst, set forth to meet her beloved Maroon. The hour of midnight was the time that had been appointed; but, in order to secure punctuality, she took her departure from Mount Welcome long before that hour—leaving herself ample time to reach the rendezvous.

Of late these after-night expeditions had become known to Miss Vaughan, and their object as well. To her young mistress, the Foolah maiden had confessed her *penchant* for Cubina—her belief of its being reciprocated; in short, had told the whole story of her love.

Common report spoke well of the young Maroon captain—Yola warmly; and as everything contributed to proclaim his intentions honourable, Miss Vaughan made no objection to his meetings with her maid.

There was something in her own sentiments to incline her to this liberal line of conduct. The young creole could sympathize with hearts that truly loved—all the better that, by experience, her own heart had learnt the bitterness of being thwarted.

At all times, therefore—so far as she was concerned—the brown-skinned sweetheart of Cubina had free leave to meet her lover.

On that particular night permission was granted to the maid more freely than ever, since, for a certain reason, the mistress herself desired the interview to take place.

The reason may be guessed without difficulty. On the previous night Cubina had thrown out a hint, which his sweetheart had communicated to her mistress.

She had spoken of some news he might have that would interest the latter; and although there was nothing definite in that, still the hint had led to an indulgence in speculations—vague as dreams, it is true, but tinged with a certain sweetness.

Kate knew something of the romantic friendship that had been established between Herbert and Cubina. Yola had long ago told her of this—as well as the incident that had

given origin to it. Perhaps that knowledge may explain the interest, almost amounting to anxiety, she now felt to ascertain the nature of the communication which the Maroon had hypothetically promised to make.

It was only in the afternoon of the day—after the excursion to the Jumbé Rock—that the maid had imparted this piece of intelligence to her mistress; and the altered demeanour of the latter during the rest of the evening proved how interesting it must have been to her. Her anxiety was scarce of the sorrowful kind, but rather tinged with an air of cheerfulness—as if some secret instinct had infused into her spirit a certain buoyancy—as if on the dark horizon of her future there was still lingering, or had suddenly arisen, a faint ray of hope.

Yola had not told all she knew. She said nothing of certain surmises that had escaped the lips of Cubina. With a woman's tact, she perceived that these, being only conjectural, might excite false hopes in the breast of her young mistress: for whom the girl felt a true affection. In fear of this, she kept back the allusion to the marriage of Herbert and Judith, and its probable failure, which

Cubina had so emphatically illustrated by a proverb.

Yola intended this reserve to be only temporary—only until after her next meeting with her lover—from which she hoped to return with a fuller power of explaining it.

Neither had she made known to her mistress the circumstance of having seen Cynthia in company with the Jew, and the conference that had occurred between them, overheard by herself and Cubina—much less the suspicions to which the latter had given expression.

Under the apprehension that a knowledge of these strange facts and suspicions might trouble her young mistress, she had withheld them.

The young creole had not retired to rest when Yola took her departure from the house, nor yet for long after. Anxious to know the result of the interview between her maid and the Maroon, she remained awake within her chamber—burning the midnight lamp far into the hours of morning.

* * * * *

Notwithstanding the more than permission that had been accorded to her, the princess-

slave stole softly from the house—passing the precincts of the mansion, and traversing the grounds outside with considerable caution. This partly arose from the habit of that half-barbaric life, to which, in her own country and from earliest childhood, she had been accustomed. But there was also, perhaps, some suspicion of present danger, or, at all events, that fear of interruption natural to one on the way to keep an appointment of the kind towards which she was now betaking herself.

From whatever motive sprung her cautious behaviour, it was not sufficient to prevent her departure from being observed; nor did it enable her to perceive that thing of woman's shape that, like an evil shadow, flitted after her across the fields, and went following her along the forest-path.

Whenever she turned it also turned, only not preserving an erect bearing, nor going in the same continuous gait; but every now and then pausing upon the path, sometimes in crouched attitude, as if seeking concealment under the shadow of the bushes—then gliding rapidly onward to make stop as before.

After having got beyond the surroundings of the house, and some distance into the

pimento forest, the Foolah walked with more freedom—as if no longer fearing interruption. She was, therefore, less likely to perceive that ill-omened shadow, that still continued on her track—following, as before, by a series of progressive traverses, and in death-like silence.

On reaching the glade, the young girl advanced towards the *ceiba*, and took her stand within its shadow—on a spot, in her eyes, “hallowed down to earth’s profound, and up to heaven.”

She merely glanced round to satisfy herself that Cubina was not there. She scarce expected him yet. The hour, though late, was earlier than the time appointed. It had not yet gone twelve—else she would have heard the plantation clock announcing it.

Allowing her eyes to drop to the ground at her feet, she stood for some minutes buried in a reverie of reflection—a sweet reverie, as befitted her situation of pleasant expectancy.

She was startled from this abstraction by the behaviour of a bird—a scarlet tanager, that rose, fluttering and frightened, out of a small clump of bushes about ten paces from the *ceiba*, and in which it had been reposing.

The bird, uttering a cry of alarm, forsook the shelter, and flew off into the forest.

Yola could see nothing that should have caused the creature to make so abrupt a departure from its roosting-place. Her own presence could scarce have been the cause: since she had been some minutes upon the ground, and standing in tranquil *pose*. Some of its natural enemies had frayed the bird? Perhaps a rat, an owl, or a serpent? Thus reasoned she; and was so satisfied.

If, instead of contenting herself with this conjecture, she had stepped ten paces forward, and looked into the little copse, she would have seen there something very different from any of the three creatures her fancy had conjured up. She would have seen the form of a woman crouching within the shadow, with features set in suppressed rage, and eyes glowing indignantly upon herself. Easily, too, would she have recognized the face as that of her fellow-slave, Cynthia!

But she saw it not, though Cynthia saw her—though for hours did the two remain in this singular juxtaposition—one occupied with the vigil of love, the other absorbed in the vigil of jealousy.

For long hours did the Foolah maid wait for the coming of her beloved Cubina—her ear keenly bent to catch any sound that might announce his approach; her bosom every moment becoming more and more a prey to painful impatience.

Equally long stayed the spy in her place of concealment—equally suffering torture from jealous imaginings.

To both it was a relief, when a footstep upon the path, and a rustling of branches, proclaimed the approach of some one towards the spot. It was but a momentary relief, mocking the anticipations of both—thwarting the joy of the one, and the vengeful design of the other.

Instead of the expected lover, a very different personage made his appearance; and almost at the same instant another, coming from the opposite side.

Both, at the same time, advanced towards the middle of the glade; and, without exchanging a word, stopped face to face near the *ceiba*, as if they had met by appointment.

They were out in the open ground, and under the full light of the moon. Both were

men, and the faces of both could be distinctly seen.

Yola knew only one of them, and the sight of him hindered her from staying to look upon the other. She merely glanced at a countenance that was fearful—though not more fearful to her than the one she had already recognized, and which had at once determined her to get away from the ground.

Keeping the great trunk between herself and the new comers, and retreating silently under its shadow, she glided back into the underwood of the forest, and was soon far from the presence of the two intruders, who had brought her long and vain vigil to such an unsatisfactory termination.

Cynthia could not have followed her example, even had she been so inclined. The two men had stopped within six paces of the spot in which she lay concealed. On every side of it the ground was clear of cover, with the moon shining full upon it. A cat could not have crept out of the copse without attracting the attention of one or the other.

Cynthia knew both the men—was the confederate of both—though not without fearing them.

At first sight of them she would have discovered herself, but disliked to come under the observation of her rival. Afterwards, when the two men had entered into conversation, she was held in her place by a dread of a different kind. She had already overheard part of what they were saying; and she feared they might punish her for eavesdropping, involuntary though it was.

Better for Cynthia had she then declared herself; but dreaming not of discovery, or the fearful fate that might be involved in it, she determined to lie still, and listen to the dark dialogue to its ending.

CHAPTER XXV.

CYNTHIA IN TROUBLE.

THE two men who had thus interrupted the silent tableau by the *ceiba* tree were Jacob Jessuron and Chakra the Coromantee.

Just at the time that Chakra departed from the Jumbé Rock to pay his nocturnal visit to the Jew, the latter was leaving his penn to honour the Coromantee with a similar call.

As both were travelling the same path, and in adverse directions, it was more than probable—a necessity, in fact—that each should meet the other before reaching the end of his journey. Also, as the glade, where stood the great *ceiba*, was on the same path, and midway between the Jumbé Rock and the Jew's penn, it was natural this encounter should take place not far from that noted trysting-place. In effect, it occurred within the glade: the two men having entered it almost at the same instant of time.

The Jew had got first into the open ground,

and was first seen. The myal-man might have had these advantages had he wished: he had been the first to arrive on the edge of the opening; but, true to his instinct of caution, he had kept under cover until making a reconnoissance, in which he saw and recognized his advancing *vis-à-vis*.

They met near the middle of the glade, just outside the shadow of the great tree, stopping face to face when within a pace or two of each other. Not the slightest salutation was exchanged between the two men—any more than if they had been two tigers who had just come together in the jungle. The secret compact between them precluded the necessity for compliment or palaver. Each understood the other; and not a word was spoken to introduce the dialogue except that which was pertinent to the business between them.

“Well, goot Shakra! you hash news for me?” interrogated the Jew, taking the initiative in the conversation. “You hash been in the direction of Savanna? Ish all right on the road?”

“Whugh!” vociferated the myal-man, throwing out his breast and jerking up his shoulders with an air of triumphant import-

ance. "All right, eh? Well, not azzackly on de road, but by de side ob daat same, dar lie a corp', wich by dis time oughter be as cold as de heart ob a water-millyum, an' 'tiff as—'tiff as—as—de 'keleton ob ole Chakra. Ha! ha! ha!"

And the speaker uttered a peal of fierce laughter at the simile he had had so much difficulty in conceiving; but which, when found, recalled the sweet triumph of his vengeance.

"Blesh my soul! Then it ish all over?"

"Daat's all ober—Ise be boun'."

"And the shpell did it? There wash no need——"

With a start the Jew paused in his speech, as if about to say something he had not intended; and which had been very near escaping him.

"There wash no need—no need for you to haf gone after?"

This was evidently not the question originally upon his tongue.

"No need!" repeated Chakra, a little puzzled at the interrogatory; "no need, so far as dat war consarned. Ob coos de 'pell did de work, as a knowd it wud, an' jess as a told you

it wud. 'Twan't fo' dat a went arter, but a puppos ob my own. Who tole ye, Massr Jake, dat I wor gone arter?"

"Goot Shakra, I washn't quite sure till now. The wench Cynthy thought ash how you had followed the Cushtos."

"Whugh! dat 'ere gal talk too much. She hab her tongue 'topped 'fore long. She *muss* hab her tongue 'topp, else she gess boaf o' us in trouble. Nebba mind! A make dat all right too—by-'m-bye. Now, Massr Jake, a want dat odder twenty-five pound. De job am finish, an' de work am done. Now's de time fo' de pay."

"That ish right, Shakra. I hash the monish here in red gold. There it ish."

As the Jew said this, he passed a bag containing gold into the hands of Chakra.

"You'll find it ish all counted correct. Twenty-five poundsh currenshy. Fifty pounsh altogetther, ash agreed. A deal of monish—a deal of monish, s' help me!"

Chakra made no reply to this significant insinuation; but, taking the bag, deposited it in the lining of his skin *kaross*, as he did so giving utterance to his favourite ejaculation,

“ Whugh ! ” the meaning of which varied according to the accentuation given to it.

“ And now, goot Shakra ! ” continued the Jew ; “ I hash more work for you. There ish another shpell wanted, for which you shall have another fifty poundsh ; but firsht tell me, hash you seen anyone to-day on your travels ? ”

“ Seed any one, eh ? Well, dat am a quessin, Massr Jake. A seed a good wheen on my trabbels : more’n seed me, I’s be boun’.”

“ But ash you seen anyone ash you know ? ”

“ Sartin a did—de Cussus fo’ one, tho’, by de gollies ! a hardly wud a knowd him, he wa’ so fur gone—moas to de bone ! He am almos’ as much a ’keleton as ole Chakra hisself. Ha ! ha ! ha ! ”

“ Anybody elshe that you hash a knowledge of ? ”

“ No—nob’dy—neery one as a know anythin’ bout ’ceppin’ de Cussus’ ’tendant. A seed odder men on de road, but dey wur fur off, and a keep dem fur off as a kud. Oa ! yes, dar wa’ one who comed near—mose too near—him I knowd. Dat wa’ one ob dem ’ere Trelawney Maroon—Quaco dey call um.”

“Only Quaco, you shay? You hash seen nothing of hish capt’in, Cubina, nor of a young white gentlemansh along with him?”

“Neider de one nor de todder ob dem two people. Wha fo’ you ask dat, Massr Jake?”

“I hash a good reason, Shakra. The young fellow I speaksh of ish a book-keeper of mine. He hash left the penn thish very morning. I don’t know for why, or whither he ish gone; but I hash a reason to think he ish in company with Capt’in Cubina. Maybe not, and maybe he’ll be back again; but it looksh suspicious. If he’sh gone for goot, the shpell will be all for nothingsh. ’S’help me, for nothingsh!”

“Dat’s a pity! I’m sorry fo’ dat, Massr Jake. A hope he no gone.”

“Whether or not, I mushn’t go to shleep about it. There ish another shpell that will be more needed now ash ever.”

“De Obi am ready. Who d’ye want um set fo’ nex’?”

“For this rashcal Cubina.”

“Ah, dat ere in welkum. De god do um bess to ’pell *him*.”

“He hash trouble for me. It ish not like to come so soon now, ash the Cushtos ish

out of the way. But who knowsh how soon? And better ash the shpell should be set at once. So, good Shakra, if you can manish to do for Cubina in as short a time ash you hash done the Cushtos, there ish another fifty poundsh ready for you."

"A'll do ma bess, Massr Jake, to earn you money. A'll do ma bess—de bess can do no mo'."

"That ish true, goot Shakra! Don't you think this wench, Cynthy, can help you?"

"Not a bit ob help from dat quar'r—not worth a 'traw for 'pelling Cubina. He no let de m'latta come nigh o' 'im fo' no considera-shun. He sick ob de sight o' her. Besides, dat gal, she know too much now. She one ob dese days fotch de white folk to de Duppy Hole. Dat nebba do. No furrer use now. She hab serb her turn, an' mus' be got rid ob—muss go 'long wi' de odders—long wi' de Cussus. Da's my way—de only way keep a woman tongue tied, am to 'top 'um waggin' altogedder. Whugh!"

After uttering the implied threat, the monster stood silent a moment, as if reflecting upon some mode by which he could make away with the life of the mulatta.

“You think, Shakra, you ish likely to find somebody elshe to assist you?”

“Nebba fear, Massr Jake. Leab dat to ole Chakra—ole Chakra an’ ole Obi. Dey do de bizness widout help from any odder.”

“Fifty poundsh, then, Shakra. Ach! I’d give twice the monish—yes, s’help me, ten times the monish—if I knew it wash all right with young Vochan. Ach! where ish he gone?”

The expression of bitter chagrin, almost anguish, with which the villanous old Jew, for at least the tenth time on that day, repeated this interrogative formula, told that, of all the matters upon his mind, the absence of his book-keeper was the one uppermost, and deemed by him of most importance.

“Blesh my soul!” continued he, lifting his umbrella high in air, and continuing to hold it up, “Blesh my soul! if he ish gone for goot, I shall have all thish trouble for nothing—all the cr-r——inconvenience!”

It was “crime” he was about to have said; but he changed the word—not from any delicacy in the presence of Chakra, but rather to still a shuddering within himself, to which the thought had given rise.

“Nebba mind, Massr Jake,” said his confederate, encouragingly; “you hab got rid ob an enemy—same’s masseff. Dat am someting, anyhow; an’ a promise you soon get shot ob one odder. A go at once ’bout dat berry bizness.”

“Yesh! yesh! soon, goot Shakra, soon ash you can! I won’t keep yoush any longer. It ish near daylight. I musht go back, and get some shleep. S’help me! I hash not had a wink thish night. Ach! I can’t shleep so long ash he’s not found. I musht go home, and see if there ish any newsh of him.”

So saying, and turning on his heel, without “good night,” or any other parting salutation, the Jew strode abstractedly off, leaving Chakra where he stood.

CHAPTER XXVI.

A FATAL SNEEZE.

“WHUGH!” ejaculated the Coromantee, as soon as his confederate was out of hearing; “dar’s someting heavy on de mind ob dat ere ole Jew—someting wuss dan de death ob de Cussus Va’gh’n. Wonder now wha’ em be all ’bout? ’Bout dis yar book-keeper a knows it am. But wha’ ’bout him? A’ll find out ’fore a’m many hour older. Daat a’ll do. Gollies! A muss go an’ git some sleep too. A’m jess like de Jew masseff—ha’n’t had ne’er a wink dis night, nor de night afore neider; nor doan expeck get de half ob a wink morrer night! Dat will be night ob all odder! Morrer night, if all ting go well, Chakra he no sleep him ’lone—he sleep no more by hisseff—he hab for him bedfellow de beauty ob all de Island ob Jamaica. He sleep wi’ de Lilly——.”

Ere the full name of the victim threatened with this horrid fate had passed from his lips, the menace of the myal-man was interrupted.

The interruption was caused by a sound proceeding from the little clump of bushes close to where Chakra stood.

It sounded exactly as if some one had sneezed—for it was that in reality. Cynthia had sneezed.

She had not done so intentionally—far from it. After what she had heard, it was not likely she would have uttered any sound to proclaim her presence.

At that instant she would have given all she possessed in the world—all she ever hoped to possess, even the love of Cubina—to have been miles from the spot, within the safe kitchen of Mount Welcome—anywhere but where she then was.

Long before the conversation between the Jew and Chakra had come to a close, she had made up her mind never to see the myal-man again—never willingly. Now an encounter appeared inevitable: he must have heard the sneeze!

The wretched woman reasoned aright—he had heard it.

A fierce “whugh!” was the ejaculation it called forth in response; and then the myal-man, turning suddenly in the direction whence

it appeared to have proceeded, stood for a short time silent, and listening.

“By golly!” said he, speaking aloud; “dat ’ere soun’ berry like a ’neeze! Some ob dem ’ere trees ha’ been a-takin’ snuff. A’d jess like know wha’ sort ob varmint made dat obstropolus noise. It wan’t a bush—dat’s sartin. Nor yet wa’ it a bird. What den? It wan’t ’t all onlike de ’neeze ob a nigga wench! But what wud a wench be a-doin’ in tha? Da’s what puzzles me. Lookee hya!” added he, raising his voice, and addressing himself to whoever or whatever might have produced the noise; “les’s hear dat ag’in, whosomebber you be! Take anodder pince ob de snuff—louder dis time, so a can tell whedder you am a man or whedder you be femmynine.”

He waited for a while, to see if his speech would elicit a response; but none came. Within the copse all remained silent, as if no living thing was sheltered under its sombre shadows.

“You wan’t ’neeze agin,” continued he, seeing there was no reply; “den, by golly, a make you, ef you am what a ’speck you is—someb’dy hid in dar to lissen. No snake

can't a 'neeze dat way, no' yet a lizzart. You muss be eyder man, woman, or chile ; an' ef you be, an' hab heerd wha's been say, by de great Accompong ! you life no be worth—— Ha ! ha ! ”

As he entered upon this last paragraph of his apostrophe he had commenced moving towards the copse, which was only six paces from his starting-point. Before the speech was completed he had passed in among the bushes ; and, bending them over with his long, ape-like arms, was scrutinizing the ground underneath.

The exclamation was called forth by his perceiving the form of a woman in a crouching attitude within the shadow.

In another instant he had seized the woman by the shoulder, and with a quick wrench jerked her into an erect position.

“Cynthy ! ” he exclaimed, as the light fell upon the countenance of the mulatta.

“Yes, Chakra ! ” cried the woman, screaming ere she spoke ; “it's me, it's me ! ”

“Whugh ! Wha' you do hya ? Youb been lissenin' . Wha' fo' you lissen ? ”

“Oh, Chakra ! I did not intend it. I came here——”

“How long you been hya? Tell dat quick!”

“Oh, Chakra—I came——”

“You hya ’fore we came in’ de glade. Needn’t ax dat. You no kud git hya atterwad. You heer all been said? You muss hab heer it.”

“Oh, Chakra, I couldn’t help it. I would have gone——”

“Den you nebba hear nodder word more. Won’t do let you go now. You come hya; you stay hya. You nebba go out ob dis ’pot. Whugh!”

And giving to the monosyllable an aspirate of fierceness, that caused it to sound more like the utterance of a wild beast than a human being, the monster threw out his long dark arms, and rushed towards his intended victim.

In another instant his long muscular fingers were clutched round the throat of the mulatta, clamping it with the tightness and tenacity of an iron garotte.

The wretched creature could make no resistance against such a formidable and ferocious antagonist. She tried to speak; she could not even scream.

“Chak—r—a, de—ar Chak—r—r—a,” came forth in a prolonged thoracic utterance, and this was the last articulation of her life.

After that there was a gurgling in her throat—the death-rattle, as the fingers relaxed their long-continued clutch—and the body, with a sudden sound, fell back among the bushes.

“You lie da!” said the murderer, on seeing that his horrid work was complete. “Dar you tell no tale. Now for de Duppy Hole; an’ a good long sleep to ’fresh me fo’ de work of de morrer night. Whugh!”

And turning away from the image of death he had just finished fashioning, the fearful Coromantee pulled the skirts of his skin mantle around him, and strode out of the glade, with as much composure as if meditating upon some abstruse chapter in the ethics of Obi.

CHAPTER XXVII.

CHAKRA TRIMMING HIS LAMP.

DAY was dawning when the tiger Chakra returned to his lair in the Duppy's Hole. With him night was day, and the dawn of the morn the twilight of evening.

He was hungry : having eaten only a morsel of food since starting out on his awful errand, just twenty-four hours ago.

The remains of a pepper-pot, still unemptied from the iron skillet in which it had been cooked, stood in a corner of the hut.

To warm it up would require time, and the kindling of a fire. He was too much fatigued to be fastidious ; and, drawing the skillet from its corner, he scooped up the stew, and ate it cold.

Finally, before retiring to rest, he introduced into his stomach something calculated to warm the cold pepper-pot—the “ heel-tap ” of a bottle of rum that remained over from the preced-

ing night ; and then, flinging himself upon the bamboo bedstead, so heavily that the frail reeds “scrunched” under his weight, he sank into a profound slumber.

He lay upon his hunched back, his face turned upward. A protuberance on the trunk of the tree, of larger dimensions than that upon his own person, served him for a bolster—a few handfuls of the silk cotton laid loosely upon it constituting his pillow.

With his long arms extended loosely by his side—one of them hanging over until the murderous fingers rested upon the floor—and his large mouth, widely agape, displaying a double serrature of pointed, shining teeth, he looked more like some slumbering ogre than a human being.

His sleep could not be sweet. It was far from being silent. From his broad, compressed nostrils came a sonorous snoring, causing the cartilage to heave outward, accompanied by a gurgling emission through his throat that resembled the breathing of a hippopotamus.

Thus slumbered Chakra throughout the live-long day, dreaming of many crimes committed, or, perhaps, only of that—the sweetest crime of all—which was yet in abeyance.

It was near night when he awoke. The sun had gone down—at least, he was no longer visible from the bottom of the Duppy's Hole—though some red rays, tinting the tops of the trees upon the summit of the cliff, told that the orb of day was still above the horizon.

Extended on his couch, Chakra saw not this. His hut was dark, the door being shut close; but through the interstices of the bamboos he could see to some distance outside, and perceived that twilight was fast deepening among the trees. The cry of the bittern, coming up from the lagoon, the shriek of the *potoo*, heard through the sough of the cataract, and the hoot of the great-eared owl—all three true voices of the night—reaching his ears, admonished him that his hour of action had arrived.

Springing from his couch, and giving utterance to his favourite ejaculation, he set about preparing himself for the adventure of the night.

His first thought was about something to eat, and his eyes fell upon the skillet, standing where he had left it, near the middle of the

floor. It still contained a quantity of the miscellaneous stew—enough for a meal.

“Woan do eat um cold,” he muttered, proceeding to kindle a fire, “not fo’ de second time. Gib me de ager chills, it wud. Mus’ fortify de belly wi’ someting warm—else a no be fit to do de work dat am to be done.”

The kindling of the fire, the warming up of the pepper-pot, and its subsequent consumption, were three operations that did not take Chakra any very great amount of time. They were all over just as the darkness of night descended over the earth.

“Now fo’ get ready de signal,” soliloquized he, moving about over the floor of his hut, and looking into crannies and corners, as if in search of some object.

“As de good luck hab it, dar be no moon to-night — leastways, till atter midnight. Atter den a doan care she shine as bright as de sun hisseff. Dare be plenty ob dark fo’ Adam to see de signal, and plenty fo’ de odder bizzness at Moun’ Welc’m’. Dar’ll be light ’nuf ’bout dat ere ’fore we takes leab o’ de place. Won’t dat be a blaze? Whugh!

“Wha hab a put dat ere tellemgraff lamp?” said he, still searching around the hut. “I’s e fo’got all ’bout wha it am, so long since a use de darned ting. Muss be un’er de bed. Ya—hya it am!”

As he said this, he drew from under the bamboo bedstead a gourd shell, of nearly egg shape, but of the dimensions of a large melon. It had a long, tapering shank—part of the fruit itself, where the pericarp narrowed towards its peduncle—and through this a string had been passed, by which the gourd could be suspended upon a peg.

Holding it by the handle, he raised the shell to the light of his lard lamp, already kindled, and stood for some time silently inspecting it.

The gourd was not perfect—that is, it was no longer a mere empty shell, but a manufactured article, containing within a most singular apparatus. On one side appeared a hole, several inches in diameter, and cut in a shape nearly pyramidal, the base being above the thick end of the oval, and the apex, somewhat blunt, or truncated, extending towards the shank.

Up to the level of the opening the shell was filled with lard, in the middle of which appeared a wick of silk cotton staple; and behind this were two bits of broken looking-glass, set slanting to each other.

The whole apparatus bore some resemblance to a reflecting lamp; and that was in reality the purpose for which the rude contrivance had been constructed.

After a careful examination, its owner appeared to be satisfied that it was in good order; and having "trimmed" it, by adding a little fresh lard, and straightening up the wick, he set the lamp aside, and proceeded with the preparation of some other paraphernalia necessary for the night's expedition.

A stick, some four feet in length, and a piece of strong cord, were the next articles procured; and these were also put on one side.

To these succeeded a long-bladed knife, and a stout pistol, with flint lock, which the Coromantee loaded and primed with great care. Both were stuck behind a belt which he had already buckled around his ribs, under the skin kaross.

“A doan ’ticipate,” said he, as he armed himself with these formidable weapons, “dar a-gwine be much need fo’ eider ob ’em. Dar ain’t nob’dy down dar am like show fight. Dat ere gran’ buckra ob late come to Moun’ Welc’m’ de say he be ’fraid ob de shadda ob danger; an’ as fo’ de brack folks, de look ob dese weapon be suffishient fo’ dem. Ef dat woan do, den a trow off my mask. De sight ob ole Chakra, dat drike ’em into fits. Dat send ebbery nigga on de plantashun into de middle ob next week. Whugh!”

Another weapon appeared to be wanting, in the shape of a large black bottle, containing rum. With this the Coromantee soon supplied himself, drawing one out from its secret hiding-place, and holding it before the light, to make sure that it was full.

“Dis bottle,” said he, as he thrust it into a pouch in his kaross, “I hab kep fo’ dis ’pecial ’casion; it am de bess weapon fo’ my puppos. When dem fellas get dar dose ob de rum, dar’ll be no back out in ’em den. Golly!” he added, glancing out, and seeing that it was now quite dark, “a muss be gone fro’ hya. By de time ole Adam sees de tellemgraph, an’

gets 'cross dem 'ere mountains, it be late 'nuf for de bizness to begin."

Finishing with this reflection, the sable conjuror took up his "telegraphic apparatus," and, stepping over the threshold, hurried away from the hut.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

SETTING THE SIGNAL.

THE short tropic twilight had passed, and night had descended upon the Island of Jamaica. It promised to be a night of deepest darkness. The moon would not rise before midnight; and even then she might not be seen, as the canopy was covered with a thick curtain of black cumulous clouds, through which neither star nor speck of blue sky was visible.

Alike lay valleys and mountains shrouded in amorphous darkness; and even the Jumbé Rock—the highest and most conspicuous summit for miles around—was wrapped in complete obscurity. Its vitreous flanks no longer sparkled in the light, since there was none; and its dark mass was so dimly outlined against the equally sombre background of the sky, as to be invisible from the valley below.

The form of a man, groping his way up the narrow ravine that debouched upon the summit of the rock, could not have been dis-

tinguished, much less the black hue of his skin, the deformity that marked his figure, or the hideous aspect of his countenance. And yet a man so characterized climbed up there, about half-an-hour after the going down of the sun.

It need scarce be said that that man was Chakra, the Coromantee. Who else would be seeking the Jumbé Rock at that hour?

What was his errand up there? Let the sequel declare.

On setting foot upon the platform, he undid the knot that fastened the skin mantle over his shoulders; and then taking off the garment, he spread it out upon the rock.

The stick he had brought up with him he placed along one edge, and there made it fast with some pieces of string. When this was accomplished, he lifted both stick and cloak from the rock, and, proceeding to the palm, he laid the stick transversely across the stem, at about the height of his own hand, and then lashed it fast to the tree.

The kaross now hung down the stem, in a spread position, the transverse stick keeping it extended to its full width.

While arranging it thus, Chakra evidently

had an eye to the direction—that is, the plane represented by the spread garment had one face fronting the valley of Mount Welcome and the cultivated lowlands between that and Montego Bay, while the reverse side was turned towards the “black grounds” of Trelawney—a tract of wild country in which not a single estate, plantation, or penn had been established, and where no such thing as a white settlement existed. In this solitude, however, there were *black* colonies of a peculiar kind; for that was the favourite haunt of the absconded slave—the lurking-place of the outlaw—the retreat of the runaway.

There, even might the assassin find an asylum, secure from the pursuit of justice. There had he found it: for among those dark, forest-clad mountains more than one murderer made his dwelling.

Robbers there were many—even existing in organized bands, and holding the authorities of the Island at defiance.

All these circumstances were known to Chakra; and some of the robbers, too, were known to him—some of the fiercest who followed that free calling.

It was to communicate with one of these

bands that the preparations of the myal-man were being made. Chakra was preparing the signal.

Satisfied that the skin cloak was extended in the proper direction, the Coromantee next took up his reflector-lamp; and having attached it against that side of the kaross facing towards the mountains, he took out his flint, steel, and tinder, and, after striking a light, set the wick on fire.

In an instant the lamp burned brightly, and the light, reflected from the bits of looking-glass, might have been seen from the back country to the distance of many miles; while, at the same time, it was completely screened from any eye looking from the side of the plantations. The projecting edges of the calabash hindered the rays from passing to either side; while the interposed disc of the spread kaross further prevented the "sheen" that otherwise might have betrayed the presence of the signal.

It was not meant for the eyes of honest men in the direction of Montego Bay, but for those of the robbers among the far hills of Trelawney.

"Jess de sort ob night fo' dem see it," mut-

tered the myal-man, as with folded arms he stood contemplating the light. "De sky brack as de Debbil's pitch-pot. Ole Adam, he sure hab some 'un on de look-out. De sure see 'im soon."

Chakra never looked more hideous than at that moment.

Stripped of the ample garment, that to some extent aided in concealing his deformity, a scant shirt, of coarse crimson flannel, alone covering the hunch; most part of his body naked, exposing to the strong light of the reflector his black corrugated skin; the aspect of his ferocious features compressed by the snake-encircled turban upon his temples, the long-bladed knife and pistol appearing in his waist-belt—all combined to produce a fearful picture, that could not fail to strike terror into whoever should have the misfortune to behold it.

Standing immovable under the glare of the lamp, his mis-shapen figure projected across the surface of the summit platform, he might easily have been mistaken for a personification of the fiend—that African fiend—after whom the rock had been named.

In this situation he remained, observing

perfect silence, and with his eyes eagerly bent upon the distant mountains, dimly discernible through the deep obscurity of the night. Only for a few minutes was this silence preserved, and the attitude of repose in which he had placed himself.

“Whugh!” he exclaimed, dropping his arms out of their fold, as if to set about some action. “I know’d dey wud soon see um. Yonner go’ de answer!”

As he spoke, a bright light was seen suddenly blazing up on the top of a distant eminence, which was suddenly extinguished.

After a short interval another, exactly similar, appeared in the same place, and in a similar manner went out again; and then, when an equal interval had elapsed, a third.

All three resembled flashes produced by powder ignited in a loose heap.

The moment the third response had been given to his signal, the Coromantee stepped up to his reflector and blew out the light.

“Dar’s no use fo’ you any mo’,” said he, apostrophizing the lamp; “dar *am* some danger keepin’ you dar. B’side, it am a gettin’ cold up hya. A want my ole cloak.”

So saying, he took down the reflector, and

after it the kaross; and, separating the latter from the piece of stick, he once more suspended the garment around his shoulders. This done, he moved forward to the front of the platform; and dropping his legs over, sat down upon the edge of the rock.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE CRY OF THE SOLITAIRE.

FROM the spot where he had seated himself, the mansion of Mount Welcome was in view—that is, it would have been, had it been day-time, or even a moonlight night. As it was, however, darkness veiled the whole valley under its opaque shadows; and the situation of the house could only have been guessed at, had it not been for the light streaming through the jalousied windows. These revealed its position to the eyes of the Coromantee.

More than one window showed light—several that were side by side giving out a strong glare. These Chakra knew to be the side windows of the great hall, or drawing-room. Its front windows could not be seen from the Jumbé Rock: since they faced towards the valley and not to the mountain.

The myal-man knew all this. A forty years' residence on the estate of Mount

Welcome had rendered perfectly accurate his knowledge of the topography of the place.

So much light shining out suggested the idea of cheerfulness; as if company were entertained within.

“Whugh!” ejaculated Chakra, as his eye caught the lights. “Doan look berry much like dey war grievin’. Dey can’t hab heer’d o’ dat ’fair yet. P’raps de hab take de body to de plantashun ob Content? Leetle dey know down dar wha’s been done. Leetle dey dream dat de proud masser ob dat ere Buff am jess at dis minnit a cold corpus. Da’s no house ob mournin’. Dar’s feas’in a-gwine on da’, a be boun’? Nebba mind! Nebba mind! Patience, ole nigga! maybe you come in fo’ share ob dem wittle ’fore he gits cold; and maybe you hab share of the dishes on which de wittle am sa’v’d up—de forks, an’ de ’poons, and de silber plate generumly. Daat *will* be a haul. Whugh!

“But wha’ care I fo’ de forks an’ de ’poons? Nuffin! Dar’s but one ting a care fo’, an’ dat am more dan silber, more na gold, more na Moun’ Welc’m, itseff! Dat am de Lilly Quasheba. Whugh! A hab lub her fo’ many long year—lub her more’n ebba; yes,

a lub her wi' de whole 'trench ob my soul. Once a git dat bewfu' gal in dese arms, a no care for de forks and de 'poons. Ole Adam be welc'm take all dem rubbish.

"No," continued he, after a pause, apparently relenting of his liberality; "dat no do, neider. A soon need boaf de forks and de 'poons. A'll want him fo' de housekeepin'. A'll want de silber an' de gold to buy odder ting. Muss hab m' share 'long wi' de ress.

"Wha am de bess place take my wife to?" muttered the intended husband, continuing the same strain of reflections. "Muss leab de Duppy Hole. Dat place no longer safe. Too near de ole plantashun. Boun to be a debbil ob a rumpus atter she carried 'way—daat are ef dey b'lieve she *am* carried away. Guess a know de way make 'um b'lieve diff'rent. Nebba mind. A know how manage dat!"

At this moment the reflections of the Coromantee were interrupted by a sound that caused him to draw his legs up on the rock, and assume an attitude as if about to spring to his feet.

At the repetition of the sound, he started up, and rapidly re-crossed to the opposite side.

At the point where the upward path debouched upon the platform, he stopped to listen.

For the third time the sound was repeated.

There was nothing strange in it—at least, to ears familiar with the voices of a Jamaica forest. It was the call of a common yet peculiar bird—the *solitaire*. The only thing strange was to hear it at that hour of the night. It was not the time when the soft and flute-like note of the *solitaire* should fall upon the ear of the forest wanderer. Hearing it at that hour was by no means strange to Chakra. It was not that which had startled him from his seat, and caused him to cross quickly to the other side of the platform. On the contrary, it was because he knew that what he had heard was *not* the note of the *solitaire*, but a counterfeit call from his confederate, Adam!

Chakra's private slogan was different—more mournful and less musical. It was an imitation of that melancholy utterance heard at night from the sedgy shores of the dark lagoon—the cry of the wailing bittern.

With a small reed applied to his lips, the Coromantee produced an exact imitation of

this cry, and then remained silent, awaiting the result.

At the bottom of the ravine could be heard a murmur of voices, as if several men were together, talking in guarded tones. Following this came a sound of scratching against the stones, and a rustling of branches, each moment becoming more distinct. Shortly after, the form of a man emerged out of the shadowy cleft, stepping cautiously upon the platform. Another followed, and another, until six in all stood upon the summit of the rock.

“Dat you, brodder Adam?” said Chakra, stepping forward to receive the first who presented himself at the head of the sloping path.

“Ya—ya! Am it Chakra?”

“Dat same ole nigga.”

“All right, kommarade. We’ve see yar signal as soon as it war hoisted. We wan’t long a comin’, war we?”

“Berry quick. A’ didn’t ’speck ye fo’ half an hour mo’.”

“Well, now we’re hya, what’s the game? I hope dar’s a good big stake to play for! Our stock of stuff wants remplenishin’ berry

badly. We haven't had de chance of a job fo' more dan a month. We're a'most in want o' wittles!"

"Wittles!" exclaimed the myal-man, laying a scornful emphasis on the word. "Dar's a ting for ye do dis night dat'll gib ye mo' dan wittle—it gib you wealth—ebbery one ob ye. Whugh!"

"Good!" ejaculated Adam, simultaneously with a chorus of like exclamations; "glad to hear dat ere bit o' intelligence. Am it dat ere little job you speak me 'bout last time I see you? Dat it, ole humpy?"

"Dat same," laconically answered Chakra, "only wi' dis diffurence," added he; "dat a call um de big job in'tead of de little un."

"Big or little," rejoined the other, "we've come ready to do it—you see we hab?"

The speaker, who appeared to be the leader of the party who accompanied him, pointed to the others as he made this remark.

The hint was scarce regarded by Chakra. Notwithstanding the murky gloom that enveloped the forms of Adam and his companions, the myal-man could see that they were all armed and equipped, though in the most varied and uncouth fashions. The wea-

pons of no two were alike. One carried an old musket, red with rust; another a fowling-piece, in like condition. Others were provided with pistols, and nearly all had long knives, or *machetes*. Thus provided, it was scarce probable that the job for whose execution Chakra had summoned them could be one of a pacific character.

Had a light been thrown upon the group that surrounded Chakra, it would have revealed a collection of faces, each provided with a set of features but little less sinister than those of Chakra himself. In not one of them would have been found a line indicative of either peace or mercy—for it was the band of the black robber Adam, celebrated as the most notorious cut-throats in the Island.

Chakra expressed no surprise at seeing them armed, nor felt any. He had expected it; and the flourish which their leader had made of this fact was only intended to make manifest that they were ready for the ordinary requirements of their vocation.

Eagerly willing were they for the extremest action; but, in order to make more certain of their compliance, Chakra thought it prudent to ply them with a little rum.

“Ma frien’s,” said he, in an affectionate tone, “you hab had de fatigue ob a long walk troo de darkness ob de night. A hab got hya a leetle drop ob someting dat’s berry good fo’ keep de cold out ob you. ’Pose we all take a wèt from dis bottle?”

To this proposition there was a general assent, expressed in varied phraseology. There was no teetotaller in that crowd of worthies.

Chakra had not thought of providing himself with either drinking-cup or calabash; but the want was scarcely felt. The robbers each in turn refreshed himself directly from the neck of the bottle, until the rum ran out.

“Well, ole humpy,” said Adam, drawing Chakra aside, and speaking in that familiar phrase that betokened a thickness of thieves between them. “I suppose the chance you spoke ’bout hab come round at las’?”

“Da’s a fack, brodder Adam. It hab come now.”

“De great buckra gone from home?”

“He gone from home, and gone *to* home. Ha! ha!”

“Come, dat’s a riddle. What you mean by gone *to* home?”

“To ’im long home. Da’s wha’ I mean.”

“Ha!” exclaimed Adam; “you don’t say the Cussos——”

“Nebber mind ’bout the Cussus now, brodder Adam. Dat you know all ’bout atterwards. It am the Cussus’ silber plate dat consarn you now; and dar’s no time to was’e in p’laverin’. By de time we gets down da, an’ puts on de masks, dey’ll be a-gwine to bed. Better dey wa’ gone to bed; but by dat time, you see, de moon ’ud be up, an’ fo’ all dese clouds mout shine out. Dat, as you know, won’t nebba do. We must ’ticipate de risin’ ob de moon.”

“True enuf. All right! I’m ready, and so are de rest.”

“Den foller me, all ob you. We can plan de mode ob ’tack as we trabbel ’long. Plenty ob time fo’ dat, when we find out how de land lie down below. Foller me!”

And with this injunction, the Coromantee commenced descending the ravine, followed by Adam and his band of burglars.

CHAPTER XXX.

A SAD PROCESSION.

ON that same evening, about half-an-hour before sunset, a singular procession was seen moving along the Carrion Crow Road, in the direction of Mount Welcome. Its slow progress, with the staid looks and gestures of those who composed the procession, betokened it to be one of a melancholy character.

A rude litter, carried upon the shoulders of four men, confirmed this impression; more especially when the eye rested upon a human form stretched along the litter, and which could easily be identified as a dead body, notwithstanding the camlet cloak that covered it.

There were ten individuals forming this funeral *cortége*; though all were not mourners. Two were on horseback, a little in advance of the rest. Four followed, carrying the litter; while close behind these came four others, two

and two—the foremost pair being lashed arm and arm to one another—each also with his hands tied behind his back, and both evidently prisoners. The two that brought up the rear appeared to be guarding them.

The individuals composing this mournful procession may be easily identified.

The two riding in advance were Herbert Vaughan and the Maroon captain; the horses they bestrode being the same that had passed over that road the day before, carrying the Custos and his negro attendant. The prisoners were the Spanish *caçadores*—their guards, Quaco and the before-mentioned attendant; while the four men bearing the body were slaves belonging to the plantation of Content.

It need scarce be added that the corpse, stretched stark and stiff upon the litter, was all that remained of the grand Custos Vaughan.

Strictly describing them, not one of the procession party could be called a mourner. None of them had any reason to be greatly aggrieved by the fate that had befallen the owner of Mount Welcome—not even his relative. Notwithstanding this absence of a cause for grief, the faces of all—the prisoners

excepted—wore a look of decent gravity becoming the occasion.

Perhaps the nephew would have more keenly felt the situation—for now that his uncle was no more, every spark of hostility had become extinguished—perhaps he might even have mourned, but for certain circumstances that had just come to his knowledge; and which had the effect not only to counteract within his heart all tendency towards sorrow, but almost to overpower it with joy.

It was only with an effort, therefore, that he could preserve upon his features that expression of sadness, due to the melancholy position in which he was placed.

Despite the presence of death, his heart was at that moment filled with a secret satisfaction—so sweet that he could not deny himself its indulgence. The source of this satisfaction may be easily traced. It will be found in the information communicated to him by the Maroon captain. During their journey of the preceding day, their vigil of the night, and, still further, their long, slow march of that morning, Cubina had made known to him many circumstances of which he had been hitherto ignorant; among other items of in-

telligence, one of the most interesting that language could have imparted.

It need scarce be said what this was. It may be guessed at by recalling the conversation between the Maroon and his mistress Yola, occurring at the last tryst under the *ceiba*—that part of it which related to the Lilly Quasheba. Though Cubina's knowledge was only second-hand, it was sufficiently definite to inspire Herbert with hope—something more than hope; and hence that secret joy whose outward manifestation he found it difficult to suppress.

Every word of the conversation that had passed between the Maroon and his mistress—every word that referred to *her* mistress—Cubina had been compelled to repeat over and over again; till Herbert knew it as well as if he had been present during the dialogue. No wonder he was not in a condition to feel very profoundly for the sad fate that had befallen his uncle—hitherto only known to him as a relative harsh and hostile.

Other secrets had Cubina disclosed to him—among the rest, the true character of his patron, Jessuron—which Herbert had already begun to suspect, and which was now re-

vealed to him in all its hideous wickedness. The history of the Foolah prince—hitherto unknown to Herbert—besides his own experiences during the last twenty-four hours, was sufficient to confirm any suspicion that might point to Jacob Jessuron. Though it was plain that the two prisoners in the custody of Quaco had not actually assassinated the Custos, it was equally clear that such had been their intention, anticipated by a death of another kind. This both Cubina and Herbert conjectured to have proceeded from the same hand—the hand of Herbert's *ci-devant* host.

The phrase is appropriate. Long before Herbert had heard one half of Cubina's disclosures, he had resolved never more voluntarily to set foot in the Happy Valley—much less return to seek shelter under the roof of Jessuron.

If he should hereafter have aught to do with the Israelite, it would be in the course of justice; as avenger of the death of his murdered relative. That Loftus Vaughan was the victim of assassination neither he nor the Maroon for a moment doubted. The conversation which the latter had listened to between Chakra and the Jew—and which, unfortunately, at the

time he had not clearly comprehended—was no longer mysterious ; only its motive remained so. The deed itself had now furnished the terrible interpretation.

Neither Herbert nor Cubina had any idea of permitting the matter to drop. An event of such fearful significance called for the fullest investigation ; and they were now proceeding with the preliminary step—carrying the body to Mount Welcome, in order that the authorities might be called together, and an inquest instituted.

How different were the feelings of Herbert from those he experienced on his former and first approach to the mansion of his haughty relative ! He was now the victim of emotions so varied and mingled as to defy description !

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE ABDUCTION.

To Chakra, viewing them from the summit of the Jumbé Rock, the well-lighted windows of Mount Welcome had proclaimed the presence of company within the mansion. In this, however, the Coromantee was mistaken. In the past such an appearance might have had that signification, or up to a very late period—that is, up to the date of the arrival of the distinguished Smythje. Since the latter had become the guest of Mount Welcome, however, the illumination of the mansion with chandelier and candelabra was not only not unusual, but had been the nightly practice.

This was Mr. Vaughan's pleasure; which, in his absence, the house steward had injunctions to carry out. The grand hall was only lit up as usual, its lustrous floor glistening in the brilliant light, while the profusion of cut glass and silver plate sparkled upon the sideboards, loudly proclaiming the opulence of

the planter. There was no strange company present—none expected—no one who did not belong to the family, except Mr. Smythje ; and he could scarcely be considered a stranger. Rather might he be regarded—for the time at least—as the master of the mansion : since in that charge had the Custos left him.

The only individuals occupying this splendid apartment were Smythje and the young mistress of Mount Welcome—both yet ignorant of what had occurred upon the Savanna Road—that fearful event which had left Kate Vaughan a fatherless orphan, at the same time depriving her of the proud title we have just bestowed upon her.

Yola, her attendant, went and came at intervals, and Thoms occasionally presented himself in the apartment, in obedience to a summons from his master.

Notwithstanding the absence of company, Smythje was in full evening dress—body-coat, breeches, silk stockings, and pumps, with silver buckles. It was his custom to dress, or be dressed, every evening—a custom so scrupulously observed, that had there been no one in the house except the negro domestics of the establishment, Smythje would have appeared

in full fashionable costume all the same. With him the exigencies of fashion were as rigorous as to a holy friar would be the observances of his religion.

The gentleman was in high spirits—merry, indeed; and, strange to say, his companion was less melancholy than of late. No doubt this had given him his cue for mirth.

Why she had been enabled to escape from her habitual dejection was not known to Smythje; but he was fain to attribute the improvement in her spirits to the near prospect of that pleasant ceremony which in a few days must indubitably take place. In a week, or a fortnight at most, Mr. Vaughan might be expected back; and then it was understood by all—tacitly by the young lady herself—that the union of Mount Welcome and Montagu Castle should be no longer delayed.

Smythje had even begun to talk of the wedding *trousseau*; of the honeymoon tour—which was to extend to the grand metropolis; and as Kate, at his request, seated herself to the harp, suggesting a musical conversation, he commenced enlarging upon the theme of the grand “opwa,” and its attractions—so dear and delightful to himself.

This sort of talk, upon other occasions, had invariably the effect of making his listener more sad ; but, strange to say, on that evening, it produced no such a disagreeable consequence. Kate's fingers flitted over the strings of the instrument, drawing music from them that was far from melancholy.

In truth, the young creole was not listening to the *couleur de rose* descriptions of the "metwopolis," and its "opwa," which Smythje was so strenuously endeavouring to impart to her.

Though seated by the harp, and striking mechanically upon its strings, she was dwelling upon thoughts of a far different character—thoughts suggested by some further intelligence which Yola had communicated to her, and which was the true source of that joy—perhaps but a transitory gleam—that overspread her countenance.

Little did Kate Vaughan suspect that the corpse of her father—lying cold and lifeless upon a stretcher, and surrounded by strange mourners—was at that moment scarce five miles distant from where she sat, and slowly approaching the now masterless mansion of Mount Welcome !

Little did she suspect, while making that music for Smythje, that, from another direction, monsters in human form were moving towards that mansion—their dark shadows projected across the glare of the window-lights—now stationary, now flitting stealthily onward—at each progressive movement drawing nearer and nearer to the walls!

She saw not these shadowy, demon-like men—had no suspicion either of their approach or intent—an intent which comprehended robbery, rapine of a far more fearful kind—murder, if need be.

Neither its mistress, neither Smythje, nor any one else of Mount Welcome, saw or suspected this mysterious circumvallation, until the movement had been successfully executed.

Not a word of warning, not a sign or gesture, was given to the occupants of the apartment, until, with wild, unearthly yells, half-a-dozen fiend-like forms—men of horrid aspect—some with black masks, others with naked visage even more hideous to behold—burst into the grand hall, and commenced the work of pillage.

One, of gigantic size, masked from crown to

throat, and wrapped in an ample covering of skin—though not sufficient to conceal the deformity of a hunched back—rushed directly up to where the fair musician was seated ; and, dashing the harp to one side, seized upon her wrist before she could disengage herself from her chair.

“ Whugh ! ” came the ejaculation, in loud aspirate, from behind the mask, “ I’s e got ye at lass, ma Lilly Quasheba—atter many’s de yea’ ob longin’ fo’ hab ye. Ef de quaderoom, ya mudder, she ’cape an’ ’corn me, I’s e take care de dauter doan’ get de same chance. You come ’long wi’ me ! ”

And as the ravisher pronounced these words, he commenced dragging his shrieking victim across the room towards the stair entrance.

Smythje’s half irresolute interposition was of no avail. With one sweep of his long, flail-like arm, he in the skin cloak sent the exquisite sprawling upon the floor.

The terrified Cockney no longer thought of resistance ; but after scrambling awhile over the polished planks at length succeeded in gaining his feet. Then, without waiting to receive a second knock-down, he shot out

through the open doorway, and, descending the stone stairs, in a couple of skips, disappeared in the darkness below.

Meanwhile the alarm had been communicated to the kitchen and all over the house. Shouts of surprise were succeeded by screams of terror. The domestics came running in from all directions; but a shot or two from the muskets and pistols of the black burglars, fired for the purpose of increasing the confusion, scattered the whole establishment of servants, Thoms among the rest, and sent them in full flight towards the sugar-works and negro village beyond.

In less than a score of seconds, Adam and his confederates had the mansion to themselves.

It was but the work of a few minutes to fling open the buffets and sideboards, and plunder them of their most valuable contents. In less than a quarter of an hour the black burglars had finished their "job," and were ready to depart.

While his confederates were thus engaged, Chakra had secured his victim at the bottom of the front stairway, where he was impatiently awaiting the completion of the pillage.

Though determined upon having his share of the booty, he cared less for that than for the gratification of that wicked desire that had so long possessed his savage soul—so long by circumstances restrained.

Notwithstanding his eagerness for this demoniac indulgence, he still possessed a certain degree of prudence. As soon as Adam and his associates made their appearance, loaded with spoils, he placed his prisoner under the charge of one of the robbers, and, commanding the others to follow him, rapidly re-ascended the stairway, and once more entered the plundered apartment.

In an incredibly short space of time the harp, the chairs, the ottomans, and other articles of light furniture, were piled up in the middle of the floor; the jalousies were wrenched from their fastenings, flung upon the heap, and then set on fire.

Quick as tinder the dry wood blazed up; and in five minutes the noble mansion of Mount Welcome was in flames!

In five minutes more, under the red glare, flung far out into the distant fields, the robbers were seen, slowly and laboriously seeking concealment within the shadows beyond

—six of them burdened with shining utensils that gave back the gleam of the blazing mansion; while the seventh, the most formidable figure of all, carried in his arms an object of a far different kind—the body of a beautiful woman—the fainting form of Lilly Quasheba!

CHAPTER XXXII.

BURGLARS ! ROBBERS ! MURDERERS !

IN solemn pace the procession which accompanied the corpse of Custos Vaughan moved silently on along the lonely road. The Jumbé Rock was now in sight, encarmined by the last rays of the sinking sun. Beyond lay Mount Welcome—a house to which the sad *cortége* was about to carry the cue for wailing and desolation.

Ah ! little dreamt they who composed it that the demon was already there before them—if not of death, of a doom equally as dark !

Could Herbert only have known that at that moment the beautiful being he loved with his whole heart, and now more than ever—she who loved him, was struggling in the arms—— !

No matter. The terrible truth will reach him but too soon. It will meet him on his way. In another hour the sweet dreams in

which, throughout that long day, he has been indulging, will meet with a dread dissipation.

At a turning of the road there stood several gigantic trees, offering a grand canopy of foliage. Under these the party halted, by the joint command of Herbert and Cubina, who at the same moment dismounted from their horses.

It was not the shade that had tempted them, for the sun had now gone down; nor yet that the bearers might obtain rest; the men were strong, and the wasted form was far from being a heavy burden. It was not for that reason that the halt had been ordered, but on account of a thought that had suggested itself to Herbert, and which was approved of by Cubina.

It was the apprehension of the dread impression which their arrival might produce at Mount Welcome—of course, on her whose father's corpse they were carrying.

They had stopped to consider what was best to be done.

A plan soon suggested itself. A messenger could be sent forward upon one of the horses to communicate the sad tidings to Trusty, the overseer, and through him the melancholy

news might be more gradually made known to her whom it most concerned.

Herbert would have gone himself, but was hindered by certain delicate considerations, based on the conflicting emotions that were stirring within him.

It mattered little who should bear the melancholy tidings to Trusty; and the negro attendant was finally chosen.

The man received his instructions; and, having mounted his own horse, rode off at such speed as the darkness, now down upon the earth, would permit.

For another hour the party remained in the place where they had halted, to give time for the messenger to execute his commission. Then, once more taking the road, they moved forward at a slow pace, Herbert alongside Cubina—now a-foot, and leading the horse upon which he had hitherto ridden.

Quaco alone guarded the prisoners; a duty to which the Maroon lieutenant was quite equal, and which he had rendered the more easy of accomplishment, by pressing into his service a piece of rope, attached round the neck of the one that was nearest, and which, held halter-fashion in his hand, enabled him

to prevent either of them from straying in the darkness. Neither, however, made any attempt to escape, knowing as both did, that the slightest movement in that direction would cost them a "thwack" from a stout cudgel—an additional implement carried in the hands of Quaco.

In this way the *cortége* had proceeded for some half-mile or so beyond its last resting-place, when it was again brought to a halt by the orders of those in the lead.

The cause of this interruption was declared to all of the party at once. All heard the hoof-strokes of a horse coming rapidly along the road, and *from* the opposite direction to that in which they were moving.

Going, as he appeared to be, at full gallop, in five minutes more, or in half the time, the horseman should be in their midst.

Was he a stranger? Or could it be their own messenger coming back? He had not been directed to return. It was deemed sufficient for him to see Mr. Trusty, and make known the news which he had been entrusted to communicate.

It was not without a feeling of surprise therefore, as the horseman dashed forward

upon the ground, and pulled up in front of the procession, that Herbert and Cubina recognized the returned attendant.

He left them no time to speculate on the mystery of his re-appearance. The white froth upon the flanks of his steed, shining through the gloom, told of fast riding; while the stammering and terrified accents in which the man proclaimed the purpose of his return rendered more startling the news he had come to communicate.

Mount Welcome was, at that moment, attacked by a band of burglars, robbers, and murderers!

There were men in masks, and men without them—equally terrible to look upon. They were plundering the great hall, had murdered Mr. Smythje, were ill-treating the young mistress of the mansion, and firing guns and pistols at every one who came in their way!

The messenger had not stayed to see Mr. Trusty. He had learnt all this from the domestics, who were hurrying in flight from the mansion. Confounded by the shouting and shots he had himself heard, and thinking that the likeliest chance of assistance would be found in the party he had just left—and

which he believed to be much nearer—he had galloped back along the road.

These were the main facts of the attendant's story—not communicated, however, with any regard to sequence, but in the most incoherent manner, and liberally interspersed with exclamations of alarm.

It was a fearful tale, and fell with a terrible effect upon the ears of those to whom it was told—Herbert and Cubina.

Burglars — robbers — murderers! Mr. Smythje killed! The young mistress of Mount Welcome in the act of being abused! and Yola? she, too——

“Quaco!” cried the Maroon captain, rushing to the rear, and addressing himself to his lieutenant, “think you our men can hear us from here? Sound your horn on the instant: your blast is stronger than mine. There is trouble at Mount Welcome. We may need every man of them. Quick—quick!”

“The devil!” cried Quaco, dropping his hold of the halter, and raising the horn to his mouth, “I’ll make them hear, if they’re in the Island of Jamaica. You keep your ground, ye pair of John Crows!” he added,

as he held the horn an inch or two from his lips. "If either of you budge a foot out of your places, I'll send a brace of bullets through your stinkin' carcades, and stop you that away. See if I don't!"

And with this emphatic admonition, the colossus applied the horn to his mouth, and blew a blast that might have been heard for miles.

In echoes it rang from the sides of the Jumbé Rock, and from many a peak lying far beyond. So loud and shrill rang it, that one might almost have believed in Quaco's affirmation: that it could be heard to the extremities of the Island!

At all events, it was heard by some not so far off: for scarce had its echoes ceased to reverberate, when half-a-dozen similar sounds, proceeding from different directions, and apparently from different distances, came back in response.

Cubina waited not to hear their repetition.

"Enough," cried he, "there are half-a-dozen of them anyhow. That will no doubt be enough. You, Quaco, stay here till they come up, and then follow to Mount Welcome.

Sound again, to direct them; and see that these two murderous villains don't escape you."

"Hadn't I better put a brace of bullets through them?" naïvely inquired Quaco. "It'll save trouble if I do that! What say you, Capen Cubina?"

"No, no, Quaco! Justice will settle accounts with them. Bring them on along with you; and follow as soon as our men get up!"

Before Quaco could offer any further suggestions, the Maroon captain had mounted the messenger's horse—Herbert having already leaped into the saddle of the other—and both, without further speech, rode forward as fast as their steeds could carry them.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

DREAD CONJECTURES.

OBSERVING a profound silence, the two young men pressed forward. Neither liked to put question to the other. Each dreaded the answer the other might make—each was thinking only of the danger of her who was dearest to him.

They urged on their steeds with equal eagerness, for both were alike interested in the *dénouement* of the dreadful drama at that moment being enacted at the mansion of Mount Welcome.

Their reflections were similar, and similarly painful.

They might be too late! Ere they could arrive upon the scene, the stage might be deserted—the tragedy played out—the players gone!

It needed not these thoughts to stimulate

them to increased speed: they were already riding as if life or death rested on the issue.

* * * * *

They had neared the flank of the Jumbé mountain, and were heading for the ridge that separated the estates of Montagu Castle and Mount Welcome.

At this point the road debouched from the forest, and the ridge came in sight. At the same instant, a cry escaped from the lips of Cubina, as with a quick wrench he drew his horse to a halt.

Herbert echoed the cry of his comrade—at the same time imitating his action.

Neither thought of questioning the other. Both had halted under the same impulse. The evil omen had been seen simultaneously by both.

Over the summit of the ridge a yellow light glared, halo-like, against the sky.

“Fire!” exclaimed Cubina. “Just over Mount Welcome! *Santa Madre!* the mansion is in flames!”

“Oh, heavens!” cried Herbert; “we shall be too late!”

Not another word passed between the two horsemen. Stirred by the same instinct, they

renewed their gallop; and silently, side by side, urged their horses up the hill.

In a few minutes they had attained the summit of the ridge, whence they could command a full view of the valley of Mount Welcome.

The mansion *was* in flames.

There was no further utterance of surprise: that was past. It was scarce a conjecture which Cubina had pronounced, on seeing that glare against the sky, but a conviction; and the crackling sounds which had assailed their ears, as they were riding upward to the crest of the ridge, had fully confirmed the event before their eyes looked on the fire itself.

There was no more a mansion of Mount Welcome. In its place a blazing pile—a broad sheet of flame, rising in gigantic jets to the sky, crowned with huge sparks and murky smoke, and accompanied by a continuous roaring and crackling of timbers, as if fiends were firing a *feu-de-joie* in the celebration of some terrible holocaust.

“Too late!—too late!” muttered both the horsemen in the same breath; and then, with despair on their faces and black fear in their hearts, they once more gave rein to their

THE MAROON.

steeds ; and, riding recklessly down the slope, galloped on towards the conflagration.

In a few seconds' time they had crossed the inclosures, and halted in front of the blazing pile ; as near to it as their frayed steeds would consent to carry them. Both at the same instant sprang from their saddles ; and, with guns grasped and ready to defend themselves against whatever enemy, approached nearer and nearer to the building.

No one appeared in front of the house. They hurried round to the rear : no one was there. Equally deserted were the grounds and the garden. Not a soul was to be seen anywhere—not a voice to be heard, except their own, as they called aloud ; and this only feebly, through the hissing and roaring of the flames.

Back and forth rushed the two men in eager haste, going round and round the house, and exploring every spot that might be expected to conceal either friend or foe. But in spite of their most eager search, and the constant summons of their shouts, not a creature appeared, and no response reached them.

For a moment they paused to consider.

It was evident the conflagration had been going on for some time. The upper storey—which was but a framework of light timber—was now nearly consumed, and only the stonework below left standing. Over this the larger beams had fallen—no longer emitting flame, but lying transversely upon each other, charred, red, and smouldering.

On finding no one near the dwelling, Cubina and Herbert made for the works. These were all standing untouched; and it was evident that no attempt had been made to fire them. Only the mansion had been given to the flames.

On arriving among the out-buildings, the two men again raised their voices; but as before, without receiving a reply.

Here everything was dark and silent as the tomb—a silence more impressive by contrast with the awe-inspiring sounds of the conflagration raging at a distance. Neither in the curing-house, nor the mill, nor the mash-house, nor the stable, could anyone be discovered. Not an individual to be seen, not a voice to respond to their oft-repeated halloos.

On rushed they to the negro cabins. Surely there someone would be found? All

could not have fled through fear of the robber-band?

As the two men turned in the direction of the negro village, a figure started up in the path—having just emerged out of the bushes. In that semblance to the imp of darkness, seen under the distant glare of the conflagration, Herbert recognized his old acquaintance Quashie.

Quashie had already identified him.

“Oh, young massr!” cried the darkey, as he rose to his feet; “de Buff am a-blazin’! It be all burn up!”

“*Crambo!* tell us something we don’t know!” impatiently demanded Cubina. “Who has set it on fire? Do you know that!”

“Did you see the incendiaries?” hurriedly added Herbert.

“See who, massr?”

“Those who set the house on fire?” inquired Herbert, still speaking with anxious haste.

“Yes—massr, I seed dem—when dey first rush up de front ’tairway.”

“Well—speak quickly—who and what were they? What were they like?”

“Law, massr, dey war like so many debbils. Dey were nigga men, an’ some had mask on dar faces. Folks say it war de Maroon ob de mountains. Black Bet she deny dat, and say no. She say ’twar some robbers of de mountains, an’ dat dey come fo’ carry off——”

“Your young mistress? Miss Vaughan? Where? where?” interrupted Herbert, gasping out the unfinished interrogatory.

“And Yola, my lad! have you seen her?” added Cubina.

“No, genlums,” replied Quashie; “I seen neider de young missa, no’ de brown gal Yola. Dey war boaf up in de great hall. I no go up dar myseff. I’s afeard dey’d kill dis chile ef he go up da. I stayed down below, till I see Mr. ’Mythje a comin’ down de stair. Lor—how de did streak it down dem dere stone step! He run in under de arch below. I guess he go hide dere. Den I took to ma heels, ’long wif de oder folk; an’ we all go hide in de bushes. Massa Thom an’ de house people dey all run for de woods—dey none o’ em nebber come back yet.”

“Oh, heavens!” exclaimed Herbert, in a voice of anguish; “can it be possible? You

are sure," said he, once more appealing to the darkey, "you are sure you saw nothing of your young mistress?"

"Nor of Yola?" asked the Maroon, equally as distressed as his companion.

"I dekla' I didn't—neider o' 'em two," emphatically exclaimed Quashie. "See yonner!" he added, pointing towards the burning pile, and speaking in an accent of alarm. "Golly! dey a'n't gone 'way yet—de robbers! de robbers!"

Herbert and Cubina, who, while in conversation with Quashie, had been standing with their backs towards the fire, faced suddenly round. As they did so, they perceived several dark forms moving between them and the bright background of the flames; their shadows projected in gigantic outlines up to the spot where the spectators stood. There were about half-a-dozen in all—just about the number at which Quashie had roughly estimated the incendiaries.

Both sprang forward, regardless of consequences, resolved upon knowing the worst; and, if their apprehensions should prove true, determined upon death or vengeance.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

SMYTHJE STILL LIVING.

WITH their pieces cocked, and ready for instant execution, Cubina and Herbert were pressing to get within range, when the notes of a horn, sounded by one of the men before the fire, came swelling upon their ears.

The sounds were re-assuring. Cubina knew the signal of his lieutenant, and they were now near enough to recognize the colossal Quaco standing in the glare of red light, surrounded by some half-dozen of his comrades.

Quaco had left the corpse upon the road, and the prisoners well guarded by a couple of his followers; and, thinking he might be wanted at Mount Welcome, had hurried forward close upon the heels of the horsemen.

This accession of strength might have proved useful had the enemy been upon the ground. Where were the robbers—the incendiaries—perhaps the murderers? Where was Miss Vaughan? Where the maid Yola?

Had they escaped among the domestics, or——?

The alternative thought was too horrible for utterance. Neither Herbert nor Cubina could trust themselves to give speech to it. Only in their minds did the interrogatory shape itself: *had they perished in the flames?*

Fearful as was the thought, it could not fail to be entertained; and, in the solemn silence which the reflection produced, all stood hopelessly gazing upon the ruthless fire that was fast reducing the noble mansion to a shapeless and smouldering ruin.

At that moment the stillness was interrupted by a voice proceeding from an unexpected quarter. It appeared to come from out the great arched vault under the stone stairway, from a corner shrouded in comparative darkness. It was partly an exclamation—partly a groan.

Quaco was the first to seek an explanation. Seizing a faggot that still flared, he rushed under the archway, regardless of the scorching heat.

Herbert and Cubina quickly followed, and all three stood within the vault.

Quaco waved the torch in front of his body, to illuminate the place.

The eyes of all three simultaneously rested upon an object that, at any other time, might have elicited from them peals of laughter.

In the corner of the vault stood a half-hogshead, or large tub — its head covered with a heavy lid. Near the upper edge a square hole had been sawed out; so that a hand containing a quart measure might be inserted, without the necessity of raising the lid. Inside, and directly opposite this opening, appeared the face of a man, with ample whiskers and moustaches; which face, despite the bedaubment of something that resembled treacle or tar, was at once identified as that of the aristocratic Smythje!

“Mr. 'Mythje!” cried Quashie, who had followed the others under the archway. “I seed him ——.”

“Fact, ma fwends, it's nawbody else but maself,” interrupted the ludicrous image within the hogshead, as soon as he recognized his ancient deliverer, Quaco. “Aw took wefuge here fwom those howid wobbers. Be so good as waise the wid, and pawmit me

to get out of this queeaw situation. Aw was afwaid aw should be ddowned. Ba Jawve! aw bwieve it's tweekle!"

Quaco, endeavouring to suppress his laughter, lost no time in throwing up the lid, and extracting the sufferer from his sweet, though unpleasant position—for it was, in reality, a hogshead of molasses into which the terrified Smythje had soused himself, and in which, during the continuance of the tragedy enacted over his head, he had remained buried up to the neck!

Placed upright upon his legs on the flagged floor of the vault, glistening from neck to heel with a thick coat of the slimy treacle, the proud proprietor of Montagu Castle presented even a more ludicrous appearance than when Quaco had last seen him upon the summit of the hollow stump.

The latter, recalling this scene to memory, and unrestrained by other sentiments, could no longer restrain himself from giving way to loud laughter, in which Quashie, equally free from sorrow, took part.

With Herbert and Cubina it was not the moment for mirth; and, as soon as Smythje had been fairly deposited on his feet, both

eagerly questioned him as to the circumstances that had transpired.

Smythje admitted having fled—at the same time making an awkward attempt to justify himself. According to his own account, and the statement was perfectly true, it was not till after he had been overpowered and struck down, that he betook himself to flight. How could he do otherwise? His antagonist was a giant, a man of vast magnitude and strength.

“A howid queetyaw,” continued Smythje; “a queetyaw with long arms, and a defawmity—a pwotubewance upon his shawders, like the haunch of a dwomedawy!”

“And what of Kate, my cousin?” cried Herbert, interrupting the exquisite, with contemptuous impatience.

“Aw—aw—yes! yaw cousin—ma paw Kate! A feaw the wobbers have bawn her off. A know she was bwought outside. Aw heard haw scweam out as they were dwagging haw down the staiw—aw—aw ——.”

“Thank Heaven, then!” exclaimed Herbert; “thank Heaven, she still lives!”

Cubina had not waited for the whole of Smythje’s explanation. The description of the robber had given him his cue: and, rush-

ing outside, he blew a single blast upon his horn—the “assembly” of his band.

The Maroons, who had scattered around the ruin, instantly obeyed the signal, and soon stood mustered on the spot.

“Upon the scent, comrades,” cried Cubina. “I know the wild boar that has been making this havoc. I know where the monster makes his den. *Crambo!* Ere an hour passes over his head, he shall answer for this villany with his accursed life. Follow me!”

CHAPTER XXXV.

ON THE TRACK OF THE DESTROYER.

As Cubina pronounced this command, he faced towards the mountain, and was hastening to gain the wicket in the garden wall, when an object came before his eyes that caused him to halt. Amidst the gloom, it was a sight that gave him joy.

He was not the only one to whom it brought gladness. Among the Maroons that had come with Quaco was one who had been suffering anguish equally with Herbert and Cubina—one who had equal cause for grief—if not for the loss of sweetheart or cousin, for that which should be dear as either—a *sister*.

A sister for whose sake he had crossed the wide ocean—had been sold into slavery—robbed by ruthless men—branded as a felon—chastised by the cruel scourge—had suffered every indignity which man could put on man. In this individual may be identified the young Foolah prince—the unfortunate Cingües.

What was it that gave Cubina joy—shared thus by Cingües?

It may be easily guessed. It was the sight of a female form, recognized by both—the sweet-heart of the one, the sister of the other—Yola!

The girl was at that moment seen coming through the wicket-gate. Once inside, she made no stop, but hastened across the garden towards the group of men.

In another instant she was standing between her brother and lover, sharing the embrace of both.

Her story was soon told, and by all listened to with breathless attention—by Herbert Vaughan with emotions that wrung blood-drops from his heart. It was short, but far too long for the impatience of apprehension and revenge.

The girl had been in one of the chambers as the robbers entered the great hall. Regardless of consequences, she had rushed out among them. Like Smythje, she had been struck down, and lay for some minutes insensible, unconscious of what was transpiring.

When her senses returned, and she could look around her, she perceived that her young

mistress was no longer in the room. The monsters were at that moment in the act of setting fire to the mansion.

A scream outside directed her. She recognized the voice of her mistress.

Springing to her feet, she glided through the open door, and down the stairway. The robbers were too much occupied—some with their booty, others with their scheme of incendiarism; they either did not observe or did not think it worth while—further to molest her.

On getting outside, she saw her young mistress borne off in the arms of a huge, misshapen man. He wore a mask over his face; but, for all this, she could tell that it was the same individual she had seen upon the preceding night in company with the Jew. The masked man, whose attention seemed wholly engrossed by his precious prize, went off alone, leaving the others to continue their work of plunder and devastation.

The African maid, in her native land habituated to similar scenes, with a quick instinct perceived the impossibility of rescuing her mistress at that moment; and, abandoning the idea of making an idle attempt, she de-

terminated to follow and ascertain to what place the robber was taking her. She might then return to Mount Welcome, and guide those who would be sent upon the pursuit.

Gliding silently along the path, and taking care not to show herself, she had kept the robber in view, without losing sight of him for a moment. The darkness was in her favour, as also the sloping path—enabling her to see from below, while she was herself in little danger of being seen.

In this way had she followed the robber up the declivity of the mountain, and in an oblique direction across it, still keeping close behind him; when all at once, and to her astonishment, she saw him suddenly disappear into the earth—bearing her young mistress upon his arm—like some monstrous fiend of the other world, who had stolen a sweet image of this, and was carrying her to his dread home in the regions of darkness.

Notwithstanding the supernatural fear with which the sudden disappearance had inspired her, the bold maiden was not deterred from proceeding to the spot.

Both her terror and astonishment were in

some degree modified when she looked over a cliff, and saw the sheen of water at the bottom of a dark abysm yawning beneath her feet. In the dim light, she could trace something like a means of descent down the face of the cliff, and this at once dispelled all idea of the supernatural.

She made no attempt to follow further. She had seen enough to enable her to guide the pursuit; and, instantly turning back upon the path, she hastened down the declivity of the mountain.

She was thinking of Cubina and his Maroons—how soon her courageous sweetheart with his brave band would have rescued her unfortunate mistress—when at that moment, in the light of the flickering fire, she recognized the very image that was occupying her thoughts.

Her story was communicated in hurried phrase to Cubina and his comrades, who, without losing a moment of time, passed through the wicket-gate, and, with all the speed in their power, commenced ascending the mountain road.

Yola remained behind with Quashie and

the other domestics, who were now flocking around the great fire, looking like spectres in the flickering light.

Cubina required no guide to conduct him. Forewarned by that wild conversation he had overheard, as well as by the events of the preceding day, he had already surmised the author of that hellish deed. More than surmised it: he was satisfied that, whatever head had planned, the hand that had perpetrated it was that of Chakra, the Coromantee.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

TOO LATE.

EAGER as hounds upon a fresh trail—quick as young, strong limbs could carry them—pressed the pursuers up the steep path that led to the Duppy's Hole.

Words could but feebly express the agony rankling in the heart of Herbert Vaughan. He knew not Chakra in person; but a full description of him, morally as well as physically, had been imparted to him by Cubina on the day before. It was not strange he should tremble with fear for the fate of her who was now in the power of a monster so fell and fiend-like—not strange that his soul should be filled with anguish.

That conditional phrase—"We may be too late!"—spoken as he urged his horse along the road; repeated as he came within sight of the burning mansion—once more found utterance on his lips; but now more emphatically and with a far more fearful significance.

His was a situation to stir the soul to its profoundest depths. Even had the victim of the vile abduction been no more than his cousin, he could not have failed to feel keenly the danger that threatened her.

But now that he viewed Kate Vaughan in another and very different light—certain, from what Cubina had told him, that she reciprocated his love—under the influence of this sentiment, his distress was tenfold greater. So late, too, had he become possessed of that knowledge—so sweet had been the ecstasy it produced—that the sudden revulsion was all the more dreadful to endure.

While murmuring the words “We may be too late,” he dare scarce trust himself to give thought to the form of danger whose dread was thus hypothetically predicted.

Cubina, though, perhaps, a little less anxious than before, was equally earnest in the pursuit; and, indeed, every one of the Maroon band showed to some extent the feelings of painful apprehension that actuated their leader, whom they knew to be the friend of the young Englishman. No one showed a disposition to lag. All were alike eager to aid in the rescue of the unfortunate young

lady, known to most of them, and honoured by those to whom she was known.

The horses had been left behind. On the steep and tangled path, they would have been only an encumbrance.

Perhaps, never before, by man on foot, had that path been traversed in so short a space of time. There was no delay on account of the darkness. As if by Divine favour, the moon had opportunely arisen, just as they were passing through the wicket-gate, and by her light they were able to proceed without pause or interruption. No stop was made anywhere, till the pursuers stood upon the edge of the Duppy cliff, and looked down into that dark abysm, where they hoped to find the spoiler and his victim.

Scarce a moment there, either. One after another they descended the tree stairway, Cubina going first, Herbert next, the others following, with like rapidity.

With the instinct of trained hunters all made the descent in silence. Only on arriving at the bottom of the cliff did an exclamation escape from the lips of their chief—Cubina.

The sight of a canoe, drawn up under the bushes, had elicited this exclamation—which

expressed surprise mingled with disappointment.

Herbert saw the canoe almost at the same instant of time, but without drawing the inference that had caused Cubina to utter that cry. He turned to the latter for an explanation.

"The canoe!" whispered Cubina, pointing down to the little craft half hidden under the leafy branches.

"I see it," said Herbert, also speaking in a whisper. "What does it signify?"

"They have gone out again."

"Oh, heavens!" cried Herbert, in an accent of anguish, the more expressive from the low tone in which the words were uttered. "If that be so, then we *are* too late—she is lost!—lost!"

"Patience, comrade! Perhaps it is only Chakra himself who has gone out; or, maybe, some one of the robbers who have been helping him, and who may be expected to return again. In any case, we must search the valley and make sure. Step into the canoe! You can't swim in your clothes, while my fellows are not embarrassed in that way. Here, Quaco! get your guns aboard this cockle-shell, and all

of you take to the water. Swim silently. No splashing, do you hear? Keep close under the cliff! Swim within the shadow, and straight for the other side."

Without more delay the guns were passed from hand to hand, until all were deposited in the canoe. Cubina and Herbert had already stepped into the frail craft, the former taking possession of the paddle.

In another instant the little vessel shot out from the bushes, and glided silently under the shadow of the cliff.

Some half-dozen human forms, their heads just appearing above the surface of the water, followed in its wake—swimming with as little noise as if they had been a brood of beavers.

There was no need to direct the canoe to its old landing-place under the tree. Cubina knew that this had been chosen for concealment. Instead of going thither, he made for the nearest point of the opposite shore. On touching land he stepped out, making a sign to his fellow-voyager to imitate his example.

The Maroons waded out the moment after; and once more getting hold of their guns, followed their captain and his companion—already on their route to the upper cascade.

There was no path from the point where they had landed ; and for some time they struggled through a thicket almost impervious. There was no danger, however, of their losing the way. The sound of the falling water was an infallible guide ; for Cubina well remembered the proximity of the hut to the upper cascade, and it was for this point they were making.

As they advanced, the underwood became easier to traverse ; and they were enabled to proceed more rapidly.

There was something lugubrious in the sound of the cataract. Cubina was painfully impressed by it, and equally so his companion. It sounded ominous in the ears of both ; and it was easy to fancy sighs of distress, wild wailings of a woman's voice, mingling with the hoarser tones of the torrent.

They reached at length the edge of the opening that extended for some distance beyond the branches of the cotton-tree. The hut was before their eyes. A light was shining through the open door. It cast its reflection across the ground shadowed by the great tree, till it met the surface silvered by the moon. Though faint, and apparently flickering, the

light gave joy to the eyes that beheld it. It was evidence that the hut was occupied.

Who but Chakra could be there? And if Chakra, there too must be his victim.

Oh! was she his victim? Had the rescue arrived *too late*?

Cubina's bosom was filled with sad forebodings. Herbert's heart was on fire. It was with difficulty that either could control his emotion to approach with that caution that prudence required.

Making a sign to his followers to stay among the trees, the Maroon captain, with Herbert by his side, crept up towards the cotton-tree.

Having got fairly under its shadow, they rose to their feet, and, with the silence of disembodied spirits, glided close up to the entrance of the hut.

In another instant the silence was broken by both. A simultaneous cry escaped them as they arrived in front of the open door and looked in. It was a cry that expressed the extreme of disappointment. The hovel was empty!

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE CORPSE OF A COUSIN.

YES, the temple of Obi was untenanted, save by those dumb deities that grinned grotesquely around its walls.

To ascertain this fact it was not necessary to enter within the shrine of the Coromantee Pantheon. Nevertheless, Cubina and Herbert, as if moved by a mechanical impulse, rushed inside the door.

They looked around with inquiring glances. There were signs of late occupation. The lighted lamp was of itself sufficient evidence of this. Who save Chakra could have lit it? It was a lamp of lard, burning in the carapace of a tortoise. It could not have been long alight: since but little of the lard was consumed.

There was no doubt that Chakra had been there, with his captive. That added nothing to the knowledge they possessed already:

since Yola had witnessed their descent into the Duppy's Hole.

But why had the robber so suddenly forsaken this apparently safe retreat? That the lamp was left burning betokened a hasty departure. And whither could he have gone?

"Oh, where?—oh, where?" distractedly interrogated Herbert.

Cubina could make no answer. He was equally astonished at not finding the Coromantee within his hut.

Had he once more gone out from the Duppy's Hole? The position of the canoe gave colour to this conjecture. But why should he have done so? Had he caught sight of that agile girl gliding like a shadow after him? and, becoming suspicious that his retreat might be discovered, had he forsaken it for some other at a greater distance from the scene of his crime?

In any case, why should he have left in such haste, not staying to put out the light—much less to carry with him his peculiar Penates?

"After all," thought Cubina, "he may still be in the Duppy's Hole. The canoe may have been used by some one else—some con-

federate. Chakra might have seen his pursuers crossing the lagoon, or heard them advancing through the thicket, and, taking his captive along with him, may have hastily retreated into some dark recess among the trees."

His sudden abandonment of the hovel rendered this view of the case the more probable.

Quick as came the thought, Cubina once more rushed out of the hut, and summoning his men around him, directed them to procure torches and search every corner of the wood. Quaco was despatched back to the canoe, with orders to stay by it, and prevent any chance of escape in that direction.

While the Maroons proceeded to procure the torchwood, their chief, accompanied by Herbert, commenced quartering the open ground in search of any trace which Chakra might have left. By the edge of the water, where the trees stood thinly, the moon afforded ample light to favour the investigation.

On advancing towards the cascade, an object came under the eyes of Cubina that caused him to utter a quick ejaculation. It was something white that lay by the side of

the cauldron into which the stream was precipitated. Within the pool itself were broad flakes of white foam floating upon the water ; but this was not in the water, but above it, on one of the boulders ; and all the more conspicuous from the black colour of the rock.

Herbert had seen the white object at the same instant of time, and both simultaneously ran forward to examine it.

A scarf!

It bore evidence of ill-usage. It was tossed and torn, as if it had fallen from someone who had been struggling!

Neither could identify the scarf, but neither doubted to whom it had belonged. Its quality declared it to have been the property of a lady. Who else could have owned it but she for whom they were in search?

Cubina appeared to pay less attention to the scarf than to the place in which it lay. It was close up to the cliff, on the very edge of the pool into which the stream was projected.

Behind this pool, and under the curved sheets of the falling water, a sort of ledge ran across, by which one could pass under the cascade.

Cubina knew this : for, while on his hunting excursions, he had gone under it. He knew, moreover, that, half way across, there was a large cave or grotto in the cliff, several feet above the water in the pool.

As the scarf was found lying upon the ledge that conducted to this grotto, the circumstance caused the Maroon to remember it, at the same time that it guided him to the conjecture that Chakra might be there. Alarmed by their approach, there was nothing more likely than for the Coromantee to have chosen the cave for his place of retreat—the last place where anyone, not aware of its existence, would have thought of looking for him.

These reflections cost Cubina scarce two seconds of time. Quick as the conjecture had shaped itself, he ran back to the hut; and, seizing a torch, which one of his men had prepared, he hurried back towards the cascade.

Then, signing to Herbert, and one or two others to follow him, he glided under the canopy of falling waters.

He proceeded not rashly, but with due

caution. There might be others within the cave besides Chakra ! His robber confederates might be there ; and these the Maroon knew to be desperate characters—men of forfeit lives, who would die before suffering themselves to be captured.

With his drawn *machete* in one hand, and the torch in the other, Cubina advanced silently and stealthily towards the entrance of the grotto. Herbert was close behind, grasping his double-barrelled gun, in readiness to fire, in case resistance should be offered from within.

Holding the torch in advance of him, Cubina entered first, though Herbert, anxious and eager, was close upon his heels.

The glare of the torch was reflected back from a thousand sparkling stalactites, and for a while the sight of both was bewildered.

Soon, however, their eyes became accustomed to the dazzling coruscation ; and then a white object, lying along the floor of the cave, seen by both at the same instant, caused them to utter a simultaneous cry—as they did so, turning to each other with looks of the most painful despair.

Between two large masses of stalagmite was

the body of a woman, robed in white. It was lying upon its back, stretched out to its full length—motionless ; apparently dead !

They needed not to pass the torch over that pale face to identify it. It was not necessary to scrutinize those wan, silent features. On first beholding the prostrate form, too easily had Herbert rushed to the sad conclusion—that it was the corpse of his cousin !

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE SLEEP-SPELL.

DURING all this time where was Chakra?

As soon as he had seen the mansion of Mount Welcome fairly given to the flames, the Coromantee, bearing its young mistress in his arms, hurried away from the spot. Outside the garden wicket he made stop: only for a moment, which was spent in a hasty consultation with the chief of the black bandits.

In the brief dialogue which there took place between them, Adam was enjoined to carry the whole of the booty to his mountain home, where Chakra promised in due time to join him. The Coromantee had no intention to resign his share of the spoils; but just then he was in no mood for making the division. He was at that moment under the influence of a passion stronger than the love of plunder.

Adam was only too eager to accede to these terms; and the confederates parted company—the robber and his followers at once shoulder-

ing their booty, and setting out for their forest dwelling among the far mountains of Trelawney.

Like the tiger who has killed his prey—and, not daring to devour it on the spot, bears it to his jungle covert—so Chakra, half dragging, half carrying Kate Vaughan, proceeded up the mountain path in the direction of the Duppy's Hole.

Lifeless as the victim of the ferocious beast appeared the form of Lilly Quasheba, hanging supple and unconscious over the arm of the human monster—equally ferocious.

Her screams no longer fell upon the ear. Her terror had exhausted her strength. Syncope, resembling death, had succeeded.

It continued, happily for her, during the whole of the transit up the mountain. The wild forest path had no terrors for her: neither the descent into the dank solitudes of the Duppy's Hole. In the traverse over that dark lagoon, she was not frightened by the scream of the startled night bird, nor the threatening roar of the close cataract. She knew no fear, from the moment she was carried away in the arms of a hideous monster, on a path lighted by the blaze of the roof under which she had

been born and reared : she experienced no feeling of any kind, until she awoke to consciousness in a rude triangular hut, lit by a feeble lamp, whose glare fell upon a face hitherto well known—the face of Chakra, the myal-man.

His mask had been removed. The Coromantee stood before her in all his deformity—of soul as of person.

Terror could go no further. It had already produced its ultimate effect. Under such circumstances reproach would have been idle ; indignation would only have been answered by brutal scorn.

Though she might not clearly comprehend her situation, the young creole did not think she was dreaming. No dream could be so horrid as that ! And yet it was difficult to believe that such a fearful scene could be real !

O God ! it was real. Chakra stood before her—his harsh voice was ringing in her ears. Its tone was mocking and exultant.

She was upon the bamboo bedstead, where the myal-man had placed her. She had lain there till, on her senses returning, she discovered who was her companion. Then had she started up—not to her feet, for the interposition of the Coromantee had hindered her from assum-

ing an erect position, but to an attitude half reclining, half threatening escape. In this attitude was she held—partly through fear, partly by the hopelessness of any attempt to change it.

The Coromantee stood in front of her. His attitude? Was it one of menace? No! Not a threat threw out he—neither by word nor gesture. On the contrary, he was all softness, all supplianee—a wooer!

He was bending before her, repeating vows of love! Oh, heavens! more fearful than threats of vengeance!

It was a terrible tableau—this paraphrase of the Beast on his knees before Beauty.

The young girl was too terrified to make reply. She did not even listen to the disgusting speeches addressed to her. She was scarce more conscious than during the period of her syncope.

After a time, the Coromantee appeared to lose patience. His unnatural passion chafed against restraint. He began to perceive the hopelessness of his horrid suit. It was in vain to indulge in that delirious dream of love—in the hope of its being reciprocated—a hope with which even satyrs are said to have

been inspired. The repellent attitude of her, the object of his demoniac adoration—the evident *dégout* too plainly expressed in her frightened features—showed Chakra how vain was his wooing.

With a sudden gesture he desisted, raising himself into an attitude of determination that bespoke some dreadful design—who knows what?

A shrill whistle pealing from without prevented its accomplishment, or, at all events, stayed it for the time.

“ ‘Tam de signal ob dat ole Jew ! ’ ” muttered he, evidently annoyed by the interruption. “ Wha he want dis time ob de night ? ’ Pose it somethin’ ’bout dat ere loss book-keeper ? Wa ! a know nuffin ’bout him. Dere ’tam ’gain, and fo’ de tree time. Dat signify he am in a hurry. Wha’s dat ? Foth time ! Den da be some trouble, sa’tin. Muss go to him—*muss go*. He nebba sound de signal fo’ time ’less da be some desp’rate ’casion fo’ do so. Wonder what he want ! ”

“ Nebba mind, Lilly Quasheba ! ” added he, once more addressing his speech to his mute companion. “ Doan bex yaseff ’bout dis interupshun. De bisness ’tween you ’n me ’ll

keep till a gets back, an' den, p'raps, a no find you so ob'tinate. You come—you 'tay out hya—you muss no be seen in dis part ob de world."

As he said this, he seized the unresisting girl by the wrist, and was about leading her out of the hut.

"Ha!" he exclaimed, suddenly stopping to reflect; "dat woan do, neider. De ole Jew mussn't know she hya—no account. She mout run back in de shanty, darfur she muss be tied. An' den she mout 'cream so he hear her, darfur she muss be gagged."

Still holding her wrist in his grasp, he looked around the hut as if in search of the means to put this design into execution.

"Ha!" he ejaculated, as if inspired by some new thought, "what hab a been bodderin' ma brains 'bout? Dar's a better plan dan eider tyin' or gaggin'—better dan boaf put togedder! De sleepin' draff. Da's de berry ting keep her quiet. Wha's de bottle, a wonder? Dar um be."

With this, he stretched forth his disengaged hand, and drew something out of a sort of pocket cut in the palm-leaf thatch. It ap-

peared to be a long narrow phial, filled with a dark-coloured fluid, and tightly corked.

“Now, young missa!” said he, drawing out the cork with his teeth, and placing himself as if intending to administer a draught to his terrified patient; “you take a suck out ob dis hya bottle. Doan be ’feerd. He do no harm—he do you good—make you feel berry comf’able, I’s e be boun’. Drink!”

The poor girl instinctively drew back; but the monster, letting go her wrist, caught hold of her by the hair, and, twisting her luxuriant tresses around his bony fingers, held her head as firmly as if in a vice. Then, with the other hand, he inserted the neck of the phial between her lips, and, forcing it through her teeth, poured a portion of the liquid down her throat.

There was no attempt to scream—scarce any at resistance—on the part of the young creole. Almost freely did she swallow the draught. So prostrate was her spirit at that moment, that she would scarce have cared to refuse it, even had she known it to be poison!

And not unlike to poison was the effect it produced—equally quick in subduing the

senses—for what Chakra had thus administered was the juice of the *calalue*, the most powerful of narcotics.

In a few seconds after the fluid had passed her lips, the face of the young girl became overspread with a death-like pallor — all through her frame ran a gentle, tremulous quivering, that bespoke the sudden relaxation of the muscles. Her lithe limbs gave way beneath her; and she would have sunk down upon the floor, but for the supporting arm of the weird conjuror who had caused this singular collapse.

Into his arms she sank—evidently insensible—with the semblance rather of death than of sleep!

“ Now, den ! ” muttered the myal-man, with no sign of astonishment at a phenomenon far from being strange to him—since it was to that same sleeping-spell he was indebted for his professional reputation—“ now, den, ma sweet Lilly, you sleep quiet ’nuff ’till I want wake you ’gain. Not hya, howsomever. You muss take you nap in de open air. A muss put you wha de ole Jew no see you, or maybe he want you fo’ himseff. Come ’long, disaway ! ”

And thus idly apostrophizing his unconscious victim, he lifted her in both arms, and carried her out of the hut.

Outside he paused, looking around, as if searching for some place in which to deposit his burden.

The moon was now above the horizon, and her beams were beginning to be reflected feebly, even through the sombre solitude of the Duppy's Hole. A clump of low bushes, growing just outside the canopy of the cotton-tree, appeared to offer a place of concealment; and Chakra was proceeding towards them, when his eye fell upon the cascade; and, as if suddenly changing his design, he turned out of his former direction, and proceeded towards the waterfall.

On getting close up to the cliff over which the stream was precipitated, he paused for an instant on the edge of the seething cauldron; then, taking a fresh hold of the white, wan form that lay helpless over his arm, he glided behind the sheet of foaming water, and suddenly disappeared from the sight—like a river-demon of Eld, bearing off to his subaqueous cavern some beautiful victim, whom he had succeeded in enticing to his haunt, and en-

trancing into a slumber more fatal than death.

In a few seconds the hideous hunchback reappeared upon the bank, no longer embarrassed by his burden ; and hearing the whistle once more skirling along the cliffs, he faced down stream, and walked rapidly in the direction of his canoe.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

A NEW JOB FOR CHAKRA.

CHAKRA, on reaching the crest of the cliff, found Jacob Jessuron in a state of impatience bordering upon torment. The Jew was striding back and forth among the trees, at intervals striking the ground with his umbrella, and giving utterance to his favourite exclamatory phrases—"Blesh my soul!" and "Blesh me!"—with unusual volubility.

Now and then also could be heard the Teutonic ejaculation, "Ach!" proving that his soul was under the influence of some unpleasant passion, that was vexing him even to torture.

"Wha's de trouble, Massr Jake?" inquired the myal-man, scrambling over the edge of the rock. "Dar's something go wrong, a 'pose, from de way you hab soun' de signal? A hear de whissel fo' time."

"There ish something wrong—a great deal ish wrong—s'help me, there ish! What hash

kept you, Shakra?" he added, with a show of vexation.

"Golly, Massr Jake, a war asleep; da's wha' d'layed me."

"How, then, hash you heard the signal four times?"

The query appeared slightly to puzzle Chakra.

"O—a—de signal fo' time," stammered he, after a pause of reflection. "Wa, ye see, a hear de fuss time in ma sleep—den de second time he wake me—de third a got to ma feet; and when de fo'th——"

The Jew—either satisfied with the explanation, or too much hurried to hear the end of it—interrupted Chakra at "de fo'th."

"It ish no time for talk when Mount Welcome ish in flames. You knowsh that, I supposhe?"

Chakra hesitated, as if considering whether to make a negative or affirmative reply.

"Of course you knowsh it. I needn't haf ashked. Who wash it? Adam hash been there. Wash it him?"

"Ole Adam hab a hand in dat ere bizness, a b'lieve."

"You knowsh it, Shakra; and I knowsh

another that hash had a hand in it. That ish not my bishness, nor what I hash come here about. There ish worse than that."

"Wuss, Massr Jake?" inquired the myalman, with an air of feigned surprise. It might have been real. "Wuss dan dat? Hab de young man no come back?"

"Ach! that ish nothings. There ish far worse—there ish danger; s'help me, there ish!"

"Danger! Wha from, Massr Jake?"

"Firsh tell me where ish Adam now? I want him, and all his fellish."

"He am gone back to de mountains."

"Ach! Gone back, you shay? How long ish he gone? Can you overtake him, Shakra?"

"Possab'e a mout; dey won't trabbel fass. Dey am too hebby load fo' dat. But wha' fo' you want ole Adam, Massr Jake?"

"Bishness of the greatesht importance. It ish life and death. Blue Dick hash been over to Mount Welcome. He hash heerd shtrange news—ach! terrible news! A messhenger who came in from the Saffana road hash brought the newsh of many dishagreeable things—among the resht that my Shpaniards haf been made prisoners by Cubina and thish

ungrateful villain of a Vochan. They are accused of murdering the Cushtos. Blesh my soul ! ”

“ What harm dat do you, Massr Jake ? Wha’s de danger ? ”

“ Danger ! Dosh you not see it, Shakra ? If theesh hunters ish brought to trial, do you supposhe they would hold their tongues ? S’help me, no ! They will turn Shtate’s efidence ; and then I should be exshposed—arreshted—ruined ! Oh ! why hash I ever trushted theesh clumsy fellish with a bishness of such importance ? ”

“ Dey am clumsy fellas, jess as you say, Massr Jake. ”

“ Ach ! it ish too late to shpeak of regretsh. It ish necessary to take some shteps to prevent thish terrible mishfortune. You musht go after Adam, and find him thish instant—thish instant, Shakra. ”

“ All right, Massr Jake. A do whatebber you bid me, nebba fear. A soon track up Adam ; but wha d’ye want me say to de ole nigga when a hab foun’ ’im ? ”

“ You needn’t shay anything—only bring him back with you to the Shumbé Rock. I shall wait there for you till you come. Don’t

keep me long in sushpense, Shakra. Make all the shpeed in your power. If you don't get back before sunrishe, all will be losht! I'll be ruined—I will, s'help me!"

"Nebba fear, Massr Jake. A woan lose a minnit. A doan tink dat ere ole nigga's got far 'way jess yet. A soon obertake 'im. A go atter him at once. Whugh!"

As Chakra uttered the exclamation, he turned on his heel, and was about to start up the mountain, in the direction of the Jumbé Rock, near which he would have to pass on his way towards the haunt of the black robbers.

"Shtay!" cried the Jew, "I'she going with you ash far ash the Shumbé Rock. I may ash well wait there ash anywhere elshe. It ish no ushe my going home now. S'help me! I cannot resht till thish thing ish settled. And now, when I thinksh of it, you may ash well let Adam know for what he ish wanted—so ash he may come prepared. Say to him he ish to go shtraight to Mount Welcome—that ish, where it ushed to be. Hesh not to show hishelf there, but prosheed along the road, till he meets the Cushtos' body, and them that ish with it. Then he ish to find

some way to rescue the Shpaniards, an' let them eshcape to me. You musht go along with Adam and hish men, elshe they may shpoil all. He musht bring his fellish well armed; you may shtand in need of them all. The messenger said there were some negroes from the eshtate of Content. Theesh won't signify. They will all run away ash soon as you show yourselves; but the others may be inclined to make fight. There ish Cubina, and the young raschal of an Englishman, besides that giant Quaco, and the messenger hishself. You thinksh you can manage them, Shakra?"

"Sure ob dat."

"You musht take them by an ambushcade."

"P'raps we kill some o' dem."

"Ash many ash you like. Only make shure to get the Shpaniards off."

"Be no great harm to kill dem too—atter de fool dey hab made ob demselves, lettin' dem fellas take um pris'ner dat a way. Whugh!"

"No, no, goot Shakra!—we mushn't kill our friendsh—we may need them again. You may promish Adam goot pay for the shob. I

don't care for the cosht, so long as it ish clefferly done."

"All right, Massr Jake ; leab dat to me an' Adam. We do de ting clebberly 'nuf, I'se be boun'."

And with this assurance Chakra strode off up the mountain, the Jew having set the example by starting forward in advance of him.

CHAPTER XL.

DEAD, OR ASLEEP?

ON beholding what he believed to be the dead body of his cousin, the grief of Herbert Vaughan proclaimed itself in a wild cry—in tones of the bitterest agony. He flung his gun upon the rock—knelt down by the side of the corpse—raised her head upon his arm, and, gazing upon that face, in death beautiful as ever, drew it nearer to his own, kissed the cold, unconscious lips—kissed them again and again, as though he had hopes that the warmth of his love might re-animate the fair form over which he was bending.

For some time his frenzied caresses were continued—their fervour unchecked by the presence of his rude companions who stood around. Respecting the sanctity of his grief, all observed a solemn silence. Nor word nor sound escaped the lips of any one. Sobs alone proceeded from Cubina. The Maroon had also cause to sorrow at that sad spectacle—but

these were not heard. They were drowned by a more powerful voice—the melancholy monotone of the cataract—that had been speaking incessantly since the creation of the world.

It was a long time before the heart of Herbert consented to his discontinuing those cold but sweet kisses—the first he had ever had; the last he was destined to have—from those pale lips; long before he could withdraw his supporting arm from beneath that beautiful head, whose shining tresses lay dishevelled along the rock.

The torch held in the hands of Cubina was burning to its base. Only when warned by its flickering light, did the chief mourner rise once more to his feet; and then making a feeble signal to those who stood around, he moved in solemn silence towards the entrance of the grotto.

His gesture was understood, and promptly obeyed. By the authority of his greater grief he had become master of the mournful ceremonies now to be observed.

The Maroons, quietly crossing their arms under the inanimate form, raised it from the rock; and, following him who had given them their silent direction, they bore it to the hut—

there placing it upon the cane couch. With instinctive delicacy all retired upon the completion of their task, leaving Herbert and Cubina alone with the body.

An interval elapsed before either essayed to speak. Both were under the influence of a profound grief, that almost stifled reflection. Cubina was the first to have other thoughts, and to give expression to them.

“*Santa Virgen!*” said he, in a voice husky with emotion, “I know not how she has died, unless the sight of Chakra has killed her. It was enough to have done it.”

The suggestive speech received no other answer than a groan.

“If the monster,” continued the Maroon, “has used other violence, I see no trace of it. There is no wound—no appearance of anything that should have produced death. Poor young creature!—there’s something dark inside her lips—but it’s not blood——”

“O God!” cried Herbert, interrupting the speaker with a fresh paroxysm of grief. “Two corpses to be carried home to the same house—father and daughter on the same day—in the same hour: both the victims of villany. O God!”

“Both victims of the same villain, I have my belief,” rejoined Cubina. “The same hand that has laid low the Custos, if I mistake not, has been at the bottom of this horrible crime. Chakra is but the weapon. Another has dealt the blow—you know who, Master Vaughan?”

Herbert was hindered from making reply. A dark form appearing in the door, distracted the attention of both from the theme of their conversation.

Quaco had heard the melancholy tidings; and, relieved from his duty by the canoe, had hurried back to the hut. He it was who now appeared in the doorway, filling it from post to post—from step to lintel.

Neither his chief nor Herbert offered any remark. Quaco’s presence did not surprise them. It was natural he should come to the hut—if only to satisfy his curiosity. Weighted with their sorrow, neither took any notice of his arrival, nor of his movements after he had entered the hut—which he did without waiting to be invited.

Having stepped inside, the colossus stood for some moments by the couch, gazing down upon the sweet, silent face. Even on his

features was depicted an expression of sorrow.

Gradually this became more subdued, or rather appeared to undergo a total change—slowly but surely altering to an expression of cheerfulness.

Slight at first, and imperceptible on account of the large scale upon which Quaco's features were formed, the expression was every moment becoming more pronounced; until at length it attracted the notice of the others, notwithstanding the abstraction caused by their poignant grief.

Both observed it at the same instant, and to both it caused a feeling of annoyance—amounting almost to indignation.

“Lieutenant,” said Cubina, addressing his subaltern in a tone of reproach, “it is not exactly the time for being gay. May I ask you what is making you smile, while others around you are overwhelmed with sorrow?”

“Why, cappen!” rejoined Quaco, “I can't see what yar all a-grievin' 'bout. Can't be the Custos: since, sartinly, you've got over grievin' for him long afore this!”

The reply—grotesque in character, and almost jovial in the manner of its delivery—

could not fail still further to astonish those to whom it was addressed. Both started on hearing it; and for some moments bent their eyes on the speaker in an expression of wonder, mingled with indignation.

Had Quaco gone mad?

“In the presence of death, sir,” said the young Maroon captain, directing a severe glance upon his lieutenant, “you might lay aside that merry mood, too common with you. It ill becomes you——”

“Death, do ye say, cappen?” interrupted Quaco; “who’s gone dead here?”

There was no reply to this abrupt interrogatory. Those to whom it was addressed were too much taken by surprise to say a word.

“If you mean the young buckra lady,” continued Quaco, “I’d give all the barbecued hog I ever owned nebber to be more dead than she jess now. Dead, i’deed? nonsense dat: she only sleep!”

Herbert and Cubina started from their seats, each uttering a cry of astonishment, in which might be detected the accents of hope.

“Who’s got a piece o’ lookin’-glass!” continued Quaco, turning his glance interroga-

tively around the hut. "Good," he exclaimed, as the sparkle of a piece of broken mirror came under his eyes; "here's the thing itself!

"Now, lookee hyar!" resumed he, taking the bit of glass from the place where it had been deposited, and rubbing its surface with a piece of rag: "you see thar's ne'er a speck upon it?"

The others, still held silent by surprise, made answer only by nodding their assent.

"Wal, now," continued Quaco, "watch me a bit."

Placing the smooth surface of the mirror to the mute lips, he held it there for a minute or more; and then, turning, he raised it up, and held it close to the light of the lamp.

"Ye see," he cried, triumphantly pointing to a white filmy bloom that appeared upon the glass, partially obscuring its sheen, "that's her breath! She no gone dead, else how she hab breath?"

His listeners were too excited to make reply. Only by exclamations did they signify their assent to the truth of his hypothesis.

"Ho!" exclaimed Quaco, suddenly dropping the bit of glass, and clutching hold of

a phial that lay upon the floor—now for the first time noticed.

“What we got here?” continued he, drawing the cork with his teeth, and thrusting the neck up his wide nostril. “Sleepin’ draugh’! I thought so. So this is the spell that’s put the young buckra lady to rest. Well, there’s another that’ll wake her, if I can only find it. It’s boun’ be hya, somewheres about; and if I can git my claws on it, I’ll make this hya young creatur’ talk to ye in less than ten minutes!”

So saying, the colossus commenced searching around the hut, looking into the numerous chinks and crannies with which both walls and roof were provided.

Restrained by surprise, blended with hopeful anticipation, neither Herbert nor Cubina offered to interrupt his actions, by word or gesture. Both remained in their respective places—silently but anxiously awaiting the event.

CHAPTER XLI.

QUACO TURNED MYAL-MAN.

To Herbert Vaughan it was a moment of tumultuous emotions—joy springing up in the midst of utter woe. That his cousin still breathed he could not doubt; that she lived he was only too ready to believe. Though mystified beyond measure by what appeared the perfect semblance of death, the words of Quaco had given him some clue to a remarkable mystery—at the same time inspiring him with the belief that in that motionless form the soul was yet present. Her breathing upon the mirror had made him sure of it.

The mystery to which Quaco's speeches had introduced him was that of *myalism*. In this the Maroon lieutenant claimed to have skill almost equalling the regular professors of the art. In addition to being Cubina's deputy on all important occasions, Quaco was the doctor of the band; and in his medical experience he had picked up some knowledge of

the system of Obeah—more especially of the trick by which, in the belief of the ignorant, a dead body can be brought to life again—that dread secret of the Coromantee charlatan, known in the West Indies as *myalism*.

“Only a sleep spell,” said Quaco, still continuing his search; “nothin’ more than that—a draught given her by the myal-doctor. I know it well enough; and I knows what’ll make all right again; though ’ithout that she’d come to of herself. A—ha! hyar it is! hyar’s the anecdote!”

A small bottle glistened between his fingers; which in another instant was uncorked and brought in contact with his nostrils.

“Yes, dis is the stuff that’s a’goin’ to coun-track that spell. In ’less ’n ten minutes’ time you see her wake up, brisk as ebber she been in her life. Now, young master, if you jess hold up the young lady’s head while I spill a drop or two down her throat——It must go down to do her good.”

Herbert, with joyful willingness, obeyed the request; and the beautiful head once more received the support of his arm.

Quaco, with all the gentleness of which his huge, coarse fingers were capable, parted

the pale lips ; and, inserting the neck of the phial, poured out a portion of its contents into the mouth of the sleeper. This done, he held the bottle for some minutes to her nostrils ; and then, laying it aside, he commenced chafing her hands between his own broad, corrugated palms.

With heart wildly beating, and eyes alternately scanning the face of Quaco and the countenance of the silent sleeper, Herbert made no effort to conceal his terrible solicitude.

It would have been far more terrible, but for the confident manner of the negro, and the triumphant tone in which he predicted the result.

Scarce five minutes had elapsed from the time of administering the antidote—to Herbert they appeared fifty—when the bosom of the sleeper was seen to swell upward ; at the same time that a sigh, just audible, escaped from her lips !

Herbert could no longer restrain his emotions. With a cry of supreme joy, he bent his face nearer to that of the young girl, and pressed his lips to hers, at the same time gently murmuring her name.

“Be quiet, young master!” cautioned Quaco, “else you may keep her longer from wakin’ up. Hab patience. Leave the anecdote to do its work. ’Tan’t goin’ to be very long.”

Herbert, thus counselled, resumed his former attitude; and remained silently but earnestly gazing upon the beautiful face, already showing signs of re-animation.

As Quaco had predicted, the “anecdote” was not long in manifesting its effects. The bosom of the young girl began to rise and fall in quick spasmodic motion, showing that respiration was struggling to return; while, at shorter intervals, sighs escaped her, audible even amidst the sounds, so similar, heard from without.

Gradually the undulations of the chest became more regular and prolonged, and the lips moved in soft murmuring—as when one is endeavouring to hold converse in a dream!

Each instant these utterances became more distinct. Words could be distinguished; and, among others, one that filled the heart of Herbert with happiness indescribable—his own name!

Despite the prudent counsel of Quaco, he

could no longer restrain himself; but once more imprinting a fervent kiss upon the lips of his beloved cousin, responded to her muttering by loudly pronouncing her name, coupled with words of love and exclamations of encouragement.

As if his voice had broken the charm—dispelling the morphine from out her veins—the eyes of the young girl all at once opened.

The long, crescent-shaped lashes displayed through their parting those orbs of lovely light, brown as the berry of the *theobroma*, and soft as the eyes of a dove.

At first their expression was dreamy—unconscious—as if they shone without seeing—looked without recognizing.

Gradually this appearance became changed. The spark of recognition betrayed itself fast spreading over pupil and iris—until at length, it kindled into the full flame of consciousness.

Close to hers was the face of which she had been dreaming. Looking into hers were those eyes she had beheld in her sleep, and with that same glance with which, in her waking hours, they had once regarded her—that glance so fondly remembered!

Again was it fixed upon her; but no longer

in silence, and unexplained. Now it was accompanied by words of love—by phrases of endearment—spoken with all the wild *abandon* of an impassioned heart.

“Herbert! cousin!” she exclaimed as soon as speech was restored to her. “It is you? Where am I? No matter, since you are by me. It is your arm that is around me?”

“Yes, dearest cousin—never more to part from this sweet embrace. Oh, speak to me! Tell me that you live!”

“Live? Ah! you thought me dead? I thought so myself. That horrid monster! He is gone? I see him not here! Oh! I am saved! It is you, Herbert? you who have delivered me from worse than death?”

“Mine is not the merit, cousin. This brave man by my side—it is he to whom we are both indebted for this deliverance.”

“Cubina! and Yola?—poor Yola? She, too, has escaped? Oh! it is a fearful thing. I cannot comprehend——”

“Dearest cousin! think not of it now. In time you shall understand all. Know that you are safe—that all danger is past.”

“My poor father! if he knew—Chakra alive—that fearful monster!”

Herbert was silent, Cubina, at the same time, withdrawing from the hut to give some orders to his followers.

“Ah, cousin, what is that upon your breast?” inquired the young girl, innocently touching the object with her fingers. “Is it not the ribbon you took from my purse? Have you been wearing it all this time?”

“Ever since that hour! Oh, Kate! no longer can I conceal the truth. I love you! I love you! I have heard——. But tell me, dearest cousin!—with your own lips declare it—do you return my love?”

“I do! I do!”

Once more Herbert kissed the lips that had given utterance to the thrilling declaration.

In that kiss two loving souls were sealed for ever!

CHAPTER XLII.

THE RESCUE.

ON starting off from the Duppy's Hole, it had been the intention of the Jew to wait by the base of the Jumbé Rock for the return of Chakra with the robbers. Before arriving at the rock, a better plan presented itself.

In the absence of Chakra—which might be a prolonged one—it occurred to him that he might profitably pass the interval of time by making a reconnoissance of Mount Welcome and its precincts.

Before parting from Chakra, therefore, a new place of rendezvous was arranged between them—at a particular place upon the mountain slope, only a short distance from the rear of the garden.

This point being settled, Chakra continued on after the home-returning bandits; while his fellow-conspirator, facing down the mountain, proceeded towards the valley of Mount Welcome.

He soon came upon the path habitually

used in the ascent and descent of the mountain. Only for a short distance did he follow it, however. He conjectured that a pursuit would be already set on foot ; and, apprehensive of encountering the pursuers, he preferred making his approach to the house by working his way through the woods, where no path existed. By this means he should advance more slowly, but with greater safety.

Favoured by an occasional flash from the smouldering fires—seen at intervals through the trees—he had no difficulty in guiding himself in the right direction ; and in due time he arrived at the rearward of the garden.

Crouching behind the wall, and looking cautiously over its top, he could command a full view of the grounds—no longer containing a grand house, but only ^a smouldering mass of half-consumed timbers.

There was still sufficient flame springing up amidst the smoke to reveal to the eyes of Jessuron a terrible *tableau*.

Under the light could be seen a number of human figures grouped around an object resembling a rude bier. On this lay the body of a white man, whose ghastly visage—ghastlier under the glare of the unnatural light—betokened it to be a corpse.

A white man stood beside it, bent over the body, and looking thoughtfully on the face. Jessuron recognized in this individual the overseer of the estate. The others were blacks—both men and women—easily known as the domestics and field slaves of the plantation.

At a short distance from these was another group—smaller in individual numbers, but equally conspicuous.

Two men lay along the grass in attitudes that showed them to be fast bound. They were white men, in colonial phraseology, though their complexions of dark olive were but a shade or two lighter than those of the negroes who surrounded them. Jessuron easily identified them as his own *employés*, the Cuban *caçadores*.

Some three or four black men stood around them, apparently acting as guards. The costume, arms, and accoutrements of these last—but quite as much their bold, upright bearing—proclaimed them to be men of a different caste from the negroes who encompassed the corpse. They were the Maroons whom Quaco had left in charge of the prisoners.

As soon as Jessuron had finished making these observations, he returned to the place of

rendezvous, where he was soon joined by Chakra and the robbers. The latter, on their homeward route, having halted for a rest not far beyond the Jumbé Rock, were there overtaken by the myal-man, and brought instantaneously back.

The report of Jessuron was delivered to Chakra, who, along with Adam and his followers, advanced to the garden wall, and became himself a spectator of the scene already described.

The circumstances suggested the necessity of immediate action. It was evident that Cubina and the main body of the Maroons had gone off in pursuit of the incendiaries at once. No account was made of the presence of the plantation negroes, and the weak guard of the Maroons that had been left could be easily overpowered.

Such were the reflections of Chakra and Adam, acted upon almost as soon as conceived; and, leaving Jessuron to await their return, they and their followers crept forward through the shrubbery of the garden.

A volley from their guns, fired from an ambush, was heard shortly after. It caused most of the Maroon guard to fall dead by the

side of their prisoners, at the same time putting to flight the people of the plantation, with their overseer at their head.

Nothing then remained but to relieve the captives from their cords; and this being readily accomplished, both robbers and *caçadores* retreated up the mountain.

On nearing the Jumbé Rock, the confederates once more separated. Adam and his followers continued on towards their mountain home, while Chakra, accompanied by the Jew, and followed by Manuel and Andres, proceeded in the direction of the Duppy's Hole.

It was the design of Jessuron that the two Cubanos should remain in that safe asylum—as guests of the Coromantee—until such time as he might find an opportunity for shipping them back to the country whence they had come.

Chakra's consent to this arrangement had not yet been obtained, and it was to this end that the Jew was now on his errand—for the second time that night—to the sombre solitude of the Duppy's Hole.

CHAPTER XLIII.

DOWN THE MOUNTAIN.

THE midnight hour had passed ere the lovers forsook the solitude of the Duppy's Hole.

From mingled motives Herbert had lingered on that wild spot. He feared the dread development which he knew must take place on their return to Mount Welcome. What a terrible blow to that young bosom, now in the full enjoyment of earth's supremest happiness! He knew the fatal truth could not long be concealed; nevertheless, he was desirous of keeping it back as long as possible—at least until his cousin had further recovered from the shock which her spirit had that night sustained.

In concert with Cubina, he had spent some time in reflecting how this temporary concealment might be effected.

Only one way suggested itself—to conduct his cousin to the house of the overseer; there to remain until, as she might suppose, her

rather could receive the news of the conflagration that had occurred, and return home again.

The young girl knew that the mansion was burnt down. Its blaze was before her eyes when they ceased to see—lighting her ravisher along the forest path. The roof that had sheltered her childhood was a ruin. She knew all that.

It was therefore but natural that a temporary home should be sought elsewhere, and in the house of the overseer. She could have no suspicion of any design in their taking her thither.

Neither Herbert nor Cubina knew whether the corpse of the Custos had yet reached its destination. Quaco, on hurriedly parting with it, had given no orders, either to the bearers or the Maroons left in charge of the two prisoners, to move forward.

The funeral *cortége* might still be upon the road, where it had been left by Herbert and Cubina.

If so, it might be possible for them to pass the ruined dwelling, and reach the house of the overseer, without any news of the assassination being communicated to her—the only

one likely to be profoundly affected by that dread disaster.

Once under the roof of Mr. Trusty, means could be taken to keep silent the tongues of those who should be brought in contact with her.

Such was the scheme, hastily concerted between Herbert and Cubina; and which they now proceeded to execute, by conducting the young creole out of the Duppy's Hole and commencing their descent towards the valley of Mount Welcome.

Only the two accompanied her. The Maroons, under their lieutenant, Quaco, remained behind; and for an important purpose—the capturing of Chakra.

Cubina would himself have stayed, but for a certain impatience once more to enjoy the company of his beloved Yola, who had been left among the other domestics of the desolated establishment.

The Maroon captain had perfect confidence—both in the skill of his lieutenant, and the courage of his followers. He could trust them for an affair like that; and as he parted from the Duppy's Hole he had very little doubt that by daybreak, or perhaps before

that time, Chakra would be the captive of Quaco.

Slowly Herbert and his cousin moved down the mountain. The moon, now shining sweetly upon the perfumed path, favoured their descent; but there was no need—no desire for haste. Cubina kept ahead, to secure them from surprise or danger. The young girl walked side by side with Herbert, leaning upon his arm—that strong arm, once so freely and affectionately promised. The time had arrived when that offer was accepted and welcomed—a proud time for the young Englishman—a happy time, as he walked on, thrilled by the touch of that round arm softly pressing his own—at times more heavily leaning upon him, not from any physical weakness on the part of his companion, but rather out of the pure fondness of her affection.

The strength of the young creole had become almost restored—the effects of the narcotic having completed disappeared. She had also recovered from the prostration of spirit which it had produced—perhaps all the sooner from the cheering presence of him who was by her side.

The terrible sufferings she had endured

were succeeded by a happiness tranquil and profound. She now knew that Herbert loved her: more than once within the hour had he given her that sweet assurance.

On her part there was no coyness—not a shadow of coquetry. She had responded to his vows by a full, free surrender of her heart.

And her hand? Was it still free?

Herbert sought an answer to this question as they passed onward—only indirectly, and with all the delicacy that circumstances would permit.

Was it true, what he had heard, that a promise had been given to Smythje?

With downcast eyes the young girl remained for some moments without vouchsafing any reply. Her trembling arm betrayed the painful struggle that was agitating her bosom.

Presently the storm appeared to have partially subsided. Her features became fixed, as if she had resolved upon a confession; and in a firm, but low, murmured voice, she made answer,—

“A promise! yes, Herbert, wrung from me in my darkest hour—then, when I thought *you* cared not for me—when I heard that you

also had made such promise—to another. Oh, Herbert! oh, cousin! believe me it was against my will; it was forced from me by threats, by appeals——”

“Then it is not binding!” eagerly interrupted the lover. “There was no oath—no betrothal between you? Even if there had been——”

“Even if there had been!” cried the young girl, repeating his words—the hot creole blood mounting suddenly to her cheeks, while her eyes expressed a certain determination. “There was no oath. Even if there had been, it could no longer bind me. No! After what has occurred this night—in the hour of danger deserted by him—no, no! After that, I could never consent to be the wife of Mr. Smythje. Rather suffer the charge of perjury, from which my own conscience would absolve me, than to fulfil that promise. Rather shall I submit to the disinherittance which my father threatens, and which upon his return he will doubtless execute. Yes, death itself, rather than become the wife of a coward!”

“How little danger of that disinherittance!” thought Herbert. “How shall I tell the fearful tidings? How reveal to her that she is at

this moment the mistress of Mount Welcome? Not yet—not yet!”

For a while the young man remained silent, scarce knowing how to continue the conversation.

She noticed his air of thoughtful abstraction. It guided her to unpleasant conjectures.

“Cousin! are you angry with me for what I have said? Do you blame me——”

“No—no!” cried Herbert, impressively; “far from it. By the conduct of this man—woman, I should call him, were it not for disgracing the name—by his behaviour to you, you would be released from the most solemn of oaths—much more a mere promise given against your will. It was not of that I was thinking.”

“Of what, Herbert?”

As she put this question she leant towards him, and gazed into his eyes with a look of troubled inquiry.

The young man was puzzled for a reply. His thoughtful silence was evidently causing her uneasiness that each moment increased. Her glances betokened some painful suspicion.

She did not wait for his answer; but, in a voice that trembled, put the additional interrogative,—

“Have *you* made a promise?”

“To whom?”

“Oh, Herbert! do not ask me to pronounce the name. You must know to whom I allude.”

Herbert was relieved by the interrogatory. It changed the current of his thoughts, at the same time giving him a cue for something to say.

“Ha! ha!” laughed he; “I think, cousin, I comprehend you. A promise, indeed! Nothing of the sort, I assure you; though, since *you* have been good enough to make confession, neither shall I conceal what has passed between her to whom you refer and myself. There was no love between us—at least, none upon my side, I can assure you, cousin. But, I will confess that, stung by what I fancied was your coldness to me—misled by a thousand reports, now happily found to be false—I had nearly committed myself to the speaking of a word which no doubt I should have rued throughout all the rest of my life. Thank fortune! circumstances have saved me—saved us both, may I say?”

“Oh, happiness! Herbert—Herbert! then you will be mine—mine only?”

Yielding to the promptings of an all-absorb-

ing passion, the young creole gave utterance to this bold interrogatory.

“Dearest Kate!” replied the lover, half delirious with joy, “my heart is yours—all yours. My hand—oh, cousin, I scarce dare to offer it! You are rich—grand—and I—I poor—penniless—even without a home!”

“Alas! Herbert, you know not. Were I rich—ten times as rich as you, believe me, you would be welcome to all. But no. Perhaps I may be poor as yourself. Ah me! you do not know; but you shall. I shall conceal nothing. Know, then, dearest cousin, that my mother was a quadroon, and I am only a *mustee*. I cannot inherit my father’s property, except by will; and not even that till an act is obtained from the Assembly. That is the errand upon which my father is gone. But whether he succeed or not, matters not now. Too surely will he disinherit me; for never shall I consent to become the wife of the man he has commanded me to marry—never!”

“Oh, cousin!” cried Herbert, enraptured by the emphatic tone in which she had declared her determination, “if you consent to become mine, I care not for your riches. Your heart is the wealth I covet—that will be

enough for me. What matters it even should we both be poor? I am young. I can work. I can strive. We may yet find friends, or, if not, we can do without them. Be mine!"

"Yours for any fate!—for life, Herbert! for life!"

CHAPTER XLIV.

AN ORPHAN.

THESE earnest utterances of love exchanged between the two cousins were suddenly interrupted. Sounds of woe broke upon the stillness of the night, and in the same place as before.

They had arrived within view of what was once the mansion of Mount Welcome.

Through the foliage that fringed the path, they could see glancing some remnants of red light, here and there flickering into a faint blaze. Now and then, as they descended the slope, they had heard the crash of falling timbers, as they gave way under the wasting fire.

A murmur of human voices, too, had reached their ears ; but only as of men engaged in an ordinary conversation ; or, at all events, not exhibiting excitement beyond what might be expected at the *finale* of such a scene as had there transpired.

All at once abruptly breaking upon this comparative tranquillity—at the same time interrupting the dialogue of the lovers—were heard utterances of a far different import: the cries of men, the screaming of women, shots, and loud shouting!

All these sounds appeared to proceed from the spot that but a few hours before had echoed to the clangour of a chorus equally diabolical in its accents.

Cubina, who had been moving some paces in advance, sprang instantly back upon the path; and, with troubled look, stopped in front of the lovers.

“What can it mean?” asked Herbert, equally showing signs of apprehension.

“The robbers! Master Vaughan! They have returned; but for what purpose I cannot guess. It must be they. I know that voice, louder than the rest. Do you hear it? ’Tis the voice of the brigand Adam! *Crambo!* I’ll silence it some day ere long—maybe, this very night. Hark! there’s another, still louder and wilder. Ho! that, too, I can distinguish. It’s the hellish shriek of Chakra!”

“But why should they have come again? They took everything a robber would care for.

What can have brought them back? There is nothing——”

“There *is!*” cried Cubina, with a quick gesture, as though the solution had just then presented itself to his mind. “*There is Yola!*”

As he said this he faced around, as if about to rush towards the fray, still strepitant—its noise rather on the increase.

For an instant he appeared to be undecided; though not from any fear of going forward.

No, it was another thought that had caused that indecision; which was soon made manifest by his words.

“Master Herbert Vaughan!” he exclaimed, in a tone of appeal; “I have helped you to rescue *your* sweetheart. Mine is in danger!”

The young Englishman stood in no need of this appeal. Already he had disengaged his arm from that of his cousin, and stood ready for action.

“Oh, Herbert!” cried the young girl, in wild accents of distress; “there is fearful danger! Oh, you must not go. Oh, do not leave me!”

Cubina looked as if regretting the challenge he had thrown out.

“Perhaps you had better not?” said he,

with no sarcasm meant by the words. "There is danger, but you must not share it. Your life now belongs to another. I did not think of that, Master Vaughan."

"In the eyes of that other," replied Herbert, "my life would be worthless, as it would to myself, were I to play the poltroon. Brave Cubina! I cannot fail you now. Dear Kate! it is Yola who is in danger—Yola, to whom we are both indebted. But for her I should not have known that you loved me; and then we should both——"

"Ah! Yola in danger!" interrupted the young creole, her affection for her maid half stifling the fear for her beloved. "Oh, Herbert! go if you will, but let me go with you. I should die if you returned not. Yes, yes; if death comes to you, it shall be mine also. Herbert, do not leave me behind!"

"Only for a moment, Kate! I shall soon return. Fear not. With right on our side, the brave Cubina and I can conquer a score of these black robbers. We shall be back before you can count a hundred. There! conceal yourself in these bushes, and wait for our coming. I shall call out for you. Behind the bushes you will be safe. Not a word, not

a movement, till you hear me calling your name."

As he uttered these admonitions, the brave young man gently guided his cousin into the thicket. Causing her to kneel down in a shaded covert, he imprinted a hurried kiss upon her forehead, and then hastily leaving her, followed Cubina towards the fight.

In a few seconds they ran down to the garden-wall, and passed rapidly through the wicket-gate, which they found standing open; on through the garden, and straight towards the place from which they imagined the sounds had proceeded.

Strange enough, these had ceased as abruptly as they had risen—the cries of the men, the screaming of the women, the shots, and the loud shouting!

All, as if by a simultaneous signal, had become silent; as though the earth had opened and swallowed not only the noises, but those who had been causing them!

Unheeding the change, Herbert and Cubina kept on; nor came to a stop until they had passed the smoking remains of the mansion, and stood upon the platform that fronted it.

There halted they.

There was still some fitful light from the burning beams ; but the beams of the moon told a truer tale. They illumined a *tableau* significant as terrible.

Near the spot was a stretcher, on which lay the corpse of a white man, half uncovered, ghastly as death could make it. Close to it were three others, corpses like itself, only that they were those of men with a black epidermis.

Herbert easily identified the first. It had been his companion on that day's journey. It was the corpse of his uncle.

As easily did Cubina recognize the others. They were, or had been, men of his own band—the Maroons—left by Quaco to guard the prisoners.

The prisoners ! where were they ? Escaped ?

It took Cubina but little time to resolve the mystery. To the practised eye of one who had tied up many a black runaway, there was no difficulty in interpreting the sign there presented to his view.

A tangle of ropes and sticks brought to mind the contrivances of Quaco for securing his captives. They lay upon the trodden ground, cast away, and forsaken.

The *caçadores* had escaped. The affair had been a rescue!

Rather relieved by this conjecture, which soon assumed the form of a conviction, Herbert and Cubina were about returning to the place where they had left the young creole—whom they supposed to be still awaiting them.

But they had not calculated on the bravery of love—much less upon its recklessness.

As they faced towards the dark declivity of the mountain, a form like a white-robed sylph was seen flitting athwart the trunks of the trees, and descending towards the garden wall. On it glided—on, and downward—as the snow-plumed gull in its graceful parabola.

Neither was mystified by this apparition. At a glance both recognized the form, with its soft, white drapery floating around it.

Love could no longer endure that anxious suspense. The young creole had forsaken her shelter, to share the danger of him she adored.

Before either could interfere to prevent the catastrophe, she had passed through the wicket—a way better known to her than to them—and came gliding across the garden, up to the spot where they stood.

An exclamation of joy announced her perception that her lover was still unharmed.

Quick as an echo, a second exclamation escaped from her lips—but one of a far different intonation. It was a cry of wildest despair—the utterance of one who suddenly knew herself to be *an orphan*. Her eyes had fallen upon the corpse of her father!

CHAPTER XLV.

AN INVOLUNTARY SUICIDE.

ON seeing the dead body of her father, Kate Vaughan sank to the earth beside it; not unconsciously, but on her knees, and in an agony of grief. Bending over it, she kissed the cold, speechless lips—her sobs and wilder ejaculations following each other in rapid succession.

Only the face of the corpse was uncovered. The camlet cloak still shrouded the body, and its gaping but bloodless wounds. She saw not these; and made no inquiry as to the cause of her father's death. The wasted features, now livid, recalled the disease under which he had been suffering previous to his departure. It was to that he had succumbed; so reasoned she.

Herbert made no attempt to undeceive her. It was not the time to enter into details of the sad incident that had transpired. The most mournful chapter of the story was now

known—the rest need scarce be told: Kate Vaughan was fatherless.

Without uttering a word—not even those phrases of consolation so customary on such occasions, and withal so idle—the young man wound his arms round the waist of his cousin, gently raised her to an erect attitude, and supported her away from the spot.

He passed slowly towards the rear of the ruined dwelling.

There was still enough light emitted from the calcined embers to make plain the path—enough to show that the little summer-house in the garden still stood there in its shining entirety. Its distance from the dwelling-house had saved it from the conflagration.

Into this Herbert conducted his *protégée*, and, after placing her on a settee of bamboos, which the kiosk contained, seated himself in a chair beside her.

Yola, who had once more appeared upon the scene, followed them, and flinging herself on the floor, at her young mistress's feet, remained gazing upon her with sympathetic looks, that evinced the affectionate devotion of the Foolah maiden.

Cubina had gone in search of the overseer,

and such of the domestics as might still have concealed themselves within a reasonable distance.

The Maroon might have acted with more caution, seeing that the second attack of the robbers had unexpectedly been made. But he had no fear of their coming again. The escape of the prisoners explained their second appearance—the sole object of which had been to rescue the *caçadores*.

For a while the three individuals in the kiosk appeared to be the only living forms that remained by the desolated mansion of Mount Welcome. The return of the robbers had produced even a more vivid feeling of affright than their first appearance; and the people of the plantation—white as well as black—had betaken themselves to places of concealment more permanent than before. The whites—overseer, book-keepers, and all—believing it to be an insurrection of the slaves, had forsaken the plantation altogether, and fled towards Montego Bay.

Among these panic-struck fugitives, or rather at the head of them, was the late distinguished guest of Mount Welcome—Mr. Montagu Smythje.

On being left alone, after the departure of

the pursuing party, he had made a rapid retreat towards the stables; and there, by the assistance of Quashie, had succeeded in providing himself with a saddled horse.

Not even staying to divest himself of his sacchariferous envelope, he had mounted and ridden at top speed for the port, announcing his fixed determination to take the first ship that should sail for his "deaw metwopolis."

Smythje had seen enough of Jamaica, and its "queeole queetyaws," and more than enough of "its howid niggaws."

Cubina, returning with Quashie—who again, imp-like, had started up in his path—the only living being the Maroon could discover, announced the fact that Mr. Smythje was no longer on the ground.

From those who occupied the kiosk, the intelligence elicited no response. Notwithstanding the many jealous pangs he had cost Herbert Vaughan, and the important part he had played in the history of the young creole's life, the great lord of Montagu Castle was no longer regarded even as a unit in the situation. Neither spoke of him—neither gave a thought to him. With perfect indifference, both Herbert and his cousin listened to the report that he was no longer on the ground.

But there was at that very moment one upon the ground who might have been better spared—one whose proximity was a thousand times more perilous than that of the harmless Smythje.

As we have said, Cubina had no apprehensions about the return of the robbers; but there was a danger near, and equally to be dreaded—a danger of which neither he nor any of the others could have had even the slightest suspicion.

The Maroon had delivered his report at the kiosk, and with Quashie attending on him, had gone back to the spot where the dead body still rested. He had gone thither to ascertain which of his own men had fallen in the late struggle, and also the better to acquaint himself with the direction which the robbers might have taken.

Just as he had turned his back upon the kiosk, a human figure—gliding so softly that it might have been mistaken for a shadow—passed through the wicket-gate in the rear of the garden, and, with stealthy step, advanced in the direction of the summer-house.

Notwithstanding an ample cloak in which the figure was enveloped, its *contour* could be

distinguished as that of a woman—one of boldly-developed form.

The blaze of the still-burning timbers was no longer constant. At intervals some piece—losing its equilibrium under the effect of the consuming fire—would fall with a crushing sound; to be followed by a fresh glare of light, which would continue for a longer or shorter period of time, according to the circumstances that created it.

Just as the silent figure, approaching along the path, had arrived within a few paces of the summer-house, one of these sudden coruscations arose, lighting up not only the interior of the summer-house, but the whole enclosure to its furthest limits.

Under that light, had anyone been looking rearwards across the garden, they would have beheld a beautiful face—beautiful, yet disfigured by an expression of mingled rage and pain, that rendered it even hideous. It was the face of Judith Jessuron.

It is not necessary to explain why she was there. The fire of jealousy was still burning in her breast—more furiously, more bitterly than ever.

In another instant she had placed herself in

a position that commanded a view of the interior of the kiosk.

What she saw there was not calculated to extinguish the fearful fire that consumed her. On the contrary, like the collision of the falling timbers, it had the effect of stirring it to increased strength and fierceness.

Kate Vaughan had raised herself from her reclining position, and was sitting upright on the bamboo settee. Herbert was by her side, also seated. Their bodies were in contact—the arm of the young man softly encircling the waist of his cousin. It would have been evident to the most uninterested observer that their hearts were equally *en rapport*; that between them was a tie—the strongest on earth—the tie of mutual love!

It needed no reasoning on the part of Judith Jessuron to arrive at this conclusion.

The tableau was typical. It was a picture that required no explanation, nor did she who looked upon it ask for any.

She did not even stay to notice the brown-skinned damsel, who seemed to be guarding the entrance of the kiosk; but, springing past her, she stood in a defiant attitude in the presence of the lovers.

“Herbert Vaughan!” cried she, in a tone

of bitter abandonment; "traitor! perjured villain! you have been false to me——"

"It is not true, Judith Jessuron!" cried the young man, interrupting her, and, as soon as he had recovered from his surprise, springing to his feet. "It is not true. I——I never intended——"

"Ha!" screamed the Jewess, her rage apparently becoming more fierce at the attempted explanation; "never intended what?"

"Never intended to marry you. I never gave you promise——"

"False!" cried Judith, once more interrupting him. "No matter now—it is all past; and since you never intended to marry me, she at least will never be your wife!"

The action that followed rendered the menace of the mad woman too easily intelligible.

As she gave utterance to it she passed her hand under the mantle in which her figure was enveloped; and, as she drew it forth again, a shining object appeared between her fingers.

It was a pistol, with silver sheen and ivory handle—small, but large enough to take life at such close quarters.

It was presented as soon as drawn, but not

at Herbert Vaughan. It was towards his companion that its muzzle was pointed!

Scarce a second passed before the report was heard; and, for a time, the kiosk was filled with smoke.

When this cleared away, and the shining light once more penetrated the apartment, a woman was seen extended on the floor, her form quivering in the last throes of life. In another instant it was motionless—a corpse!

The shot had proved fatal; but the victim was not Kate Vaughan, but Judith Jessuron!

The transposition was due to the Foolah maid. Seeing the life of her mistress in such imminent peril, she had sprung up from her seat by the door; and, bounding forward with the supple quickness of a cheetah, had seized the wrist of the intended murderess, with the intention of averting her aim, and, in doing so, had directed it upon herself.

It was by accident, therefore, and not from design on the part of Yola, that Judith Jessuron thus terminated her life by an involuntary suicide.

CHAPTER XLVI.

QUACO IN AMBUSH.

THE Maroon captain, before leaving the Duppy's Hole, had given official orders to his lieutenant about the capture of Chakra. There could no longer be any question of the absence of the myal-man from his haunt. The Maroons had continued their search after the discovery in the cave, still thinking that he might be concealed somewhere in the wood. The bushes were well beaten—the trees, where it was possible for a man to have climbed, were all scrutinized ; and the search had ended without their finding any other trace of the Coromantee than what had been already discovered.

Beyond doubt, Chakra had gone abroad—though in what direction, no one could guess ; and to have attempted tracking him at night, and through a pathless forest, would have been labour lost.

The correct scheme for capturing him was for the Maroons to remain in the Duppy's Hole,

against his return ; and, by keeping in ambuscade until he should have re-crossed the lagoon, they would have him, as it were, in a trap.

This was the plan chosen—with the execution of which Quaco was intrusted.

Indeed, the initiatory steps had been taken already : for ever since the search by torch-light had been abandoned, Quaco and his men had been placed in ambush.

Cubina perceived the error he had committed in causing the search to be made.

Chakra might have been upon the cliff above, where he could not have failed to see the light of the torches.

If so, there would not be the slightest hope of his returning for that night. After witnessing such an invasion of his secret haunt, his caution would be upon the *qui vive*—enough to hinder him from venturing down into the Duppy's Hole, notwithstanding the attractive lure he had there left behind him.

Cubina thus reflected with regret—with chagrin. The capture of Chakra had now become an object of primary importance.

After all, the apprehension that he had seen the torches, or in any way become aware of

the intrusion of strangers upon his solitary domain, may have been an idle one. If so, then he would be certain to come back. The presence of his prisoner was earnest of his return, and at no distant period of time.

To make sure of his capture, the Maroon captain had himself planned the ambush. Quaco and his men were placed under the great tree—where the myal-man was accustomed to moor his craft. Some of them were stationed on the tree, among its branches, with the design that they should drop upon the shoulders of the Coromantee, as soon as he should arrive at his anchorage.

The canoe itself was to be left at the bottom of the stairway, after being taken thither by the Maroon captain and his two companions, on their departure from the place. All this was done as designed.

Before parting from the canoe, Cubina had taken the precaution to place it in the exact position in which it had been left by Chakra : so that the latter could have no suspicions that the craft had been used during his absence.

These arrangements having been completed, Quaco and his comrades—Cingües among the number—from their station by the edge of the

lagoon, with eyes bent alternately upon the water and the face of the cliff, awaited the coming of the Coromantee.

The Maroons were armed with guns, loaded and primed. Not that they intended to kill Chakra. On the contrary, Cubina's orders were to capture him. Criminal as was the outlawed myal-man, it was not their province to decide upon his criminality—at least, not so far as to the depriving him of his life. Free as was the license enjoyed by these mountain rovers, there were laws around them by which even they were bound to abide. Besides, there would be no danger of his escaping from the punishment that was his due. They knew that Chakra's capture would be but the prelude to his execution.

They had a different reason for being attentive to their arms. It was just possible the Coromantee might *not return alone*. They knew he had been in the company of others—Adam and his band of desperate robbers. These confederates might come back along with him. In that case, the quiet scheme of their capture might be transformed into a sanguinary encounter.

It was not necessary all should keep awake.

One-half of the little band were appointed sentinels, while the others went to sleep.

The lieutenant himself was among the number of those who were entitled to the latter privilege : since for two days and nights he had scarce slept a wink.

Speedily surrendering himself to the drowsy god, Quaco indulged in a profound slumber—snoring in such fashion, that, but for the louder intonation of the waters surging through the gorge below, his huge nostrils would have betrayed his presence to the expected Chakra—even before the latter should have set foot in his canoe.

As it was, however, the roaring of the cataract quite drowned the nasal music of the sleeping Quaco, and his companions suffered him to snore on.

CHAPTER XLVII.

THE DOOM OF DESTINY.

UNTIL daybreak was Quaco permitted to continue his snoring and his slumber. Up to that time, no Chakra appeared; but just as the red aurora began to tinge the tops of the forest trees, a dark form was distinguished upon the summit of the cliff, just over the tree stairway.

It had scarce made its appearance, when another was seen coming forward by its side; and, in the rear of both, another—and then a fourth.

All four halted for a moment upon the brow of the precipice. Whether they were in conversation could not be told. Likely they were, but their voices could not be heard above the mutterings of the moving water.

Presently, he who had first made his appearance commenced descending the cliff, followed by the others, apparently in the same order in which they had arrived upon its edge.

Cingües had already shaken Quaco from his slumbers. The other sleepers had also been aroused by their companions; and, perceiving the numbers of the enemy, had grasped their guns with a firmer hold.

Though the day had now dawned, none of the four shadowy figures, outlined against the façade of the cliff, could be identified. The dark rock and the bramble hindered them from being fairly seen. Not even when they had reached the bottom of the stair could they be recognized: for there also the frondage afforded them cover.

It was only after the two foremost had entered the canoe, and the craft was seen gliding out into the open water, that Quaco could tell who were the two individuals thus seeking the solitude of the Duppy's Hole.

"Chakra!" said he, in a whisper to Cingües. "The t'other? Prince! if my eyes don't bamboozle me, it's your old acquaintance, the penn-keeper!"

To the Fellatah this piece of information was superfluous: he had already recognized the well-known features of the man who had so deeply injured him.

The memory of all his wrongs rushed into

his heart, accompanied by a thirst for vengeance—keen, irresistible.

With a wild cry—and before Quaco could interpose—he raised his piece and fired.

The young African was a marksman of unerring aim; and but for the upraised arm of Quaco, that had disturbed the level of that deadly tube, the hours of Jacob Jessuron would have been numbered.

And numbered they were. Despite the interruption—despite the accident that guided that leaden missile far wide of its mark—destiny had determined upon having its victim.

Neither of the occupants of the canoe appeared to have been wounded; but as the smoke cleared away, it could be seen that the shot had not passed them without effect. Chakra's hands were empty; the paddle had been struck by the bullet; and, carried clean out of them, was now seen on the surface of the water, fast gliding towards the gorge!

A shrill cry escaped from the lips of the Coromantee. He alone understood the danger to which this accident had exposed him. He alone knew of the whirl that threatened to overwhelm both himself and his companion.

Instantly he threw himself upon his knees,

and, with an arm extended on each side of the canoe, and his body bent down to the gunwale, he commenced beating the water with his broad palms. His aim was to prevent the craft from being drawn into the centre of the current.

For some moments this strange struggle was kept up—the canoe just holding its own—making way neither upwards nor downwards.

The Maroons watched the movement with mute surprise; and no doubt would have continued to do so, but that the two men left by the bottom of the stairway—perhaps stirred by a like curiosity—had rushed forward to the edge of the water, and thus permitted their faces to be seen. At the same instant were they recognized by one who had an old account to settle with them.

“The jack Spaniards!” cried Quaco, surprised beyond measure at the sight of his *ci-devant* prisoners. “They have got loose from our guard. Fire upon them, comrades! Don’t let them escape a second time!”

The stentorian voice of the Maroon lieutenant, audible above all other sounds, at once awakened the *caçadores* to a sense of their dangerous situation; and, like a brace of

baboons, they commenced sprawling up the tangled stairway.

Too late had they taken this resolution. Before they had got a third of the way to the summit, half-a-dozen triggers were pulled ; and their bodies, one after the other, fell with a heavy plunge into the water below.

Meanwhile Chakra, in the canoe, had kept up his life and death struggle, now going against the current—and now the watery element appearing to prevail.

For the moment the Maroons could not have decided that strife. They were engaged in re-loading their guns ; and the Coromantee was left free to continue his struggles without interruption.

Chakra's bitterest enemies could scarce have desired to bring that scene to a speedy termination. No avenger need have wished his victim in a more terrible situation than were he and his confederate at that moment.

The former, acting under the instinct of self-preservation, had not yet given way to despair ; while the terrified look of the latter, who appeared to have already succumbed to it, might have restrained his deadliest foe from interference.

Between the long, sinewy arms of Chakra and the strength of the current, it was difficult to decide which would conquer. For many minutes the forces appeared to be equally balanced. But the strength of the man was declining, while that of the element remained the same. In the end, the waters must prevail. Chakra at length appeared to become convinced of this; and cast round him a glance of mingled inquiry and despair.

At that moment an idea seemed to strike him—some thought, perhaps, that promised him a chance of escape.

All at once he desisted from his hopeless efforts to stay the canoe, as if some resolution had suddenly become fixed; and, turning towards his companion, he bent down, apparently with the intention of whispering to him. His wild, dark look, however, declared his design to be far different.

When fairly within reach, he threw out his long arms with a sudden jerk, and, clutching the Jew by both shoulders, drew him up into his embrace, like some gigantic spider seizing upon its prey.

Suddenly changing his hold, he grasped an arm and limb; and, raising the body high in

air, with an immense muscular effort, he projected it clear over the gunwale of the canoe.

One shriek from the Jew—emitted in the extremest accent of grief—was heard simultaneously with the plunge; and then the body of the unfortunate man disappeared beneath the dark waters of the lagoon.

His hat and umbrella alone floated on the surface, both rapidly carried along by the current.

The wretched creature rose again, but not to discover any chance of saving himself from destruction. The only gratification he could have drawn from his temporary emergence was to perceive that his false confederate must perish as well as himself.

Chakra had hoped that by lightening the canoe he might contend more successfully with the current; but it soon became evident that his hopes would prove vain.

In disembarassing himself of his *compagnon du voyage* he had lost way; and, before he could recover it, the canoe was sucked into a charybdis, from which even the power of the paddle could not have extricated it.

In less than ten seconds the craft entered

the embouchure of the gorge, gliding downward with the velocity of an arrow.

It was but a despairing effort on the part of its occupant to seize upon a tree that grew horizontally from the rocks; though in his despair Chakra clutched it. Even had the bush been firmly rooted, his strength would not have sustained him against the fierce, resistless flood.

But it was not. The roots gave way; and, in another instant, the Coromantee and his canoe were precipitated an hundred feet sheer among the black rocks below!

His confederate had preceded him only by two seconds of time; and the dead bodies of both came once more in close contact—circling round and round, amidst the frothy spume that creamed over the cauldron below!

CHAPTER XLVIII.

CONCLUSION.

ON the morning that succeeded the occurrence of these tragic events, one entering at the great gate of Mount Welcome estate, and directing his eye up the long, palm-shaded avenue, would have beheld but a mass of black, smoking ruins.

On any other morning, twelve months after, the eye of a person looking in the same direction, would have been gladdened by a sight far different. Smiling in all its splendour, at the end of that vegetable vista, once more could be seen the proud mansion of Mount Welcome — *renaissant* in every respect — its stone stairway still standing — its white walls and green-jalousied windows looking as if they had sprung, phœnix-like, from the flames — every item of the architecture so closely in imitation of the former structure, that even the eye of an old acquaintance could have detected no trace of the transformation.

Outside, everything appeared as before. It was only upon entering the mansion that you might perceive a change, and this chiefly relating to its occupancy and ownership. Instead of a stout, red-faced, and somewhat plebeian personage, of over forty years old, you would see in the present proprietor of Mount Welcome a youth of noble mien, by age scarce claiming the privileges of manhood, but in aspect and demeanour evidently fit for the performance of its duties—deserving to be the master of that aristocratic mansion.

Near him—oh! certain to be near him—there is one upon whom the eye rests with still greater interest; one who had graced the old mansion—yet more gracing the new—the daughter of its former proprietor, the wife of its present one.

She has not even changed her name—only her condition. Lilly Quasheba is no longer *Miss* but *Mrs.* Vaughan!

Both these personages may be seen seated in that great hall, with floor as smooth and furniture as resplendent as ever.

It is the hour after breakfast, and also, as of yore, the hour when the post may be expected. Not that either cared to look abroad

for that diurnal messenger—more welcome to those around whom Hymen has not yet wound his golden chain.

Equally indifferent were these two happy individuals to the actions of the outside world: neither cared for its news. Their love, still in the fresh flush of its honeymoon, was world enough for them; and what interest could either feel in the arrival of the mail?

But the post has no respect either for indifference or anxiety. It is transmitted alike to the grave and the gay. It brings joy to the heart heavy laden, and sorrow to that which the moment before its arrival may have been bounding with bliss.

In that great hall in the mansion of Mount Welcome there were two bosoms brimful of bliss, or a feeling near akin to it. Nay, why should we say *akin* to it, since they were two hearts in the enjoyment of a mutual love? If that be not bliss, there is no other—either on earth or in heaven.

Without any attempt at concealment, the eyes of both betrayed their mutual delight. Gazing on each other, in sweet reciprocal admiration, they saw not that dark form—rudely centaurean—that approached up the long avenue.

Had they seen it, it would have created no surprise. It was only the post-boy, Quashie, on his shaggy cob, returning from the Bay.

After this speculative peroration, the reader may be apprehensive of some dire development springing from the letter-bag slung over the shoulders of the darkey.

Nothing of the kind. There was a letter, but not one that might be unwelcome. But for the post-mark, it might have remained for hours unopened.

But the impress was peculiar. It was African. The letter was stamped with the name of a port near the mouth of the Gambia. It was addressed to "Herbert Vaughan, Esq., Mount Welcome, Jamaica."

The young planter broke the seal, and rapidly ran over the contents of the letter.

"From your brother, Cubina," said he, though he knew that he imparted no information by this. "He writes to say he is coming back again to Jamaica."

"Oh! I am so glad of that! I knew he would never live contented among those wild people, notwithstanding he has been made a prince over them; but Yola——"

"She comes with him, of course. It is not likely he would leave her behind. She longs

for her island-home again. I don't wonder, dearest Kate. There is one spot on the earth hallowed beyond all others—the spot where heart meets heart in the free confession of a mutual love. No wonder the African maiden should desire to return to it. Human nature is everywhere the same. To me this Island is the elysium of earth!”

“Ah! to me also!”

On giving utterance to this mutual confession, the young husband and wife bent towards each other, and pressed lips as fervently as if they had never been married!

After this fond embrace, Herbert continued the reading of the letter.

“Oh!” exclaimed he, when he had perused another portion of the epistle; “your brother wants to know whether he can either become our tenant or purchase that piece of land that lies beyond the Jumbé Rock. The old king has given him a capital to start with, and he wants to turn coffee-planter.”

“I am glad he has such intentions. Then he will settle down, and be near us.”

“He must not be permitted to purchase it. We shall present it to him, since we have enough without it. What say you, Kate? It is yours, not mine to give.”

“ Ah ! ” returned the young wife, in a tone of playful reproach, “ do not distress me with those sad *souvenirs*. You know that I gave it to you when I might have believed myself its mistress ; and——”

“ Stay, dearest. Do not you distress *me* by such an appeal ! You were its rightful owner, and should have been. Even had we not become joint proprietors, I could never have thought of dispossessing you. Say, then, that the land shall be Cubina’s ! ”

A repetition of that sweet embrace pronounced the consent of both to the proposal of Cubina.

Herbert resumed the reading of the letter.

“ Good heavens ! ” cried he, on finishing its perusal, “ what a singular story ! The captain of the slaver, who brought Yola’s brother over to Jamaica, has been back again to the coast. What a terrible retaliation ! ”

“ What, dear Herbert ? ”

“ Only that *they have eaten him !* ”

“ Oh, merciful Father ! ”

“ Sad and terrible though it be, it is true ; else Cubina would not have written it. Hear what he says :—

“ ‘ Jowler ’—that was the name of the slaver’s captain—‘ presented himself before

old Foolah-foota, in search of a fresh cargo of slaves. The king, already apprised of the skipper's treason to Cingües, instantly ordered him to be seized; and, without trial or other formality, caused him to be chopped to pieces upon the spot. He was afterwards cooked and eaten, at the grand national feast, which was held on the celebration of my nuptials with the princess Yola. *Crambo!* it was a painful scene; and one might have felt sympathy for the unfortunate wretch, had he been anything else than a dealer in human flesh; but, under that reflection, I stood by without feeling any great desire to interfere in his behalf. In fact, my Fellatah father-in-law was so furious, I could not have saved the wretch from a fate which, after all, was perhaps not more than he deserved; and to which, no doubt, the poor victims he had carried across the Atlantic would have been only too glad to have seen him consigned.' "

"It is well," said Kate, with a thoughtful air, "that Cubina has determined upon leaving a land where, I fear, such scenes are too common. I shall be so happy to see them both once more in our dear, beautiful Island.

And you, Herbert, I am sure, will rejoice at their return."

"Most certainly I shall. Ah, Kate! did it ever occur to you how much we are indebted to them?"

"Often, Herbert—often. And were it not that I am a firm believer in destiny, I should fancy that but for them——"

"Nonsense, Kate!" playfully interrupted the young husband. "None of your creole superstitions. There is no such thing as destiny. It was not that which ruled my heart to believe you the fairest thing in creation—but because you *are* so. Don't be ungenerous to Cubina and Yola. Give them all the credit that is due to them. Say frankly, love, that but for them you might have become Mrs. Smythje, and I—I——"

"Oh, Herbert! speak not of the past. Let that be buried in oblivion, since our present is everything we can desire!"

"Agreed! But for all that, dearest, do not let us forget the gratitude we owe to Cubina and his dark-skinned bride. And to prove it to them, I propose something more than giving them the piece of land. Let us build them a

house upon it; so that upon their arrival they may have a roof to shelter them."

"Oh, that would be a pleasant surprise for them!"

"Then we shall bring it about. What a lovely morning! Don't you think so, Kate?"

As Herbert put this interrogatory, he glanced out through the open jalousies.

There was nothing particularly fine about the morning—at least, for Jamaica, but Kate saw with Herbert's eyes; and just then, to the eyes of both, everything appeared *couleur-de-rose*.

"Indeed, a beautiful morning!" answered the young wife, glancing inquiringly towards her husband.

"What say you, then, to a little excursion, *à pied*?"

"I should be delighted, Herbert. Where do you think of going?"

"Guess now!"

"No—you must tell me."

"You forget. According to creole custom, our honeymoon is to last for twelve months. Until that be terminated, you are to be master, sweet Kate. Where would you most like to go?"

“I have no choice, Herbert. Anywhere. In your company it is all the same to me. You must decide.”

“Well, then, dearest, since you leave it to me, I declare for the Jumbé Rock. Its summit overlooks the piece of land we intend presenting to our brother, Cubina. While we are there we can select the site for his house. Is it agreeable to you?”

“Dearest Herbert,” replied the young wife, entwining her arm around that of her husband’s, and gazing fondly into his eyes—“the very place I was thinking of.”

“Why of it? Tell me, Kate!”

“Shame, Herbert! Must I tell you? You know that I have told you before.”

“Tell me again. It gives me pleasure to hear you speak of that hour.”

“Hour! scarce a minute was it, and yet a minute worth all the rest of my life! A minute in which I learnt that the language of your eyes was truer than that of your tongue! But for that belief, Herbert, I might, indeed, have yielded to despair. The memory of that sweet glance haunted me—sustained me through all. Despite all, I continued to hope!”

“And I, too, Kate. That remembrance is as dear to me as it can be to you. Let us seek the hallowed spot.”

* * * * *

An hour after, and they stood upon the Jumbé Rock, on that spot so consecrated in their hearts.

Herbert appeared to have forgotten his purpose. Not a word was said about Cubina or the site of his dwelling. Not a word of the Happy Valley, or the unpleasant recollections it was calculated to call up. All the past appeared to be forgotten, except that one sweet scene; and on this were concentrated the thoughts of both—their words as well.

“And you loved me then?” inquired he, only to enjoy the luxury of an affirmative answer. “You loved me then?”

“Oh, Herbert! how could I help loving you? Your eyes were so beautiful then!”

“What! Are they not so now?”

“How cruel to ask the question! Ah! far more beautiful now! Then I beheld them only with anticipation; now I look into them with the consciousness of possession. That moment was pleasure—this is ecstacy!”

The last word was perfectly appropriate—

not a shade too strong to express the mutual feeling that existed between Herbert Vaughan and his cousin-wife. As their rounded arms became entwined, and their young bosoms pressed fondly together, both believed that even in this unhappy world ecstasy may exist.

THE END.

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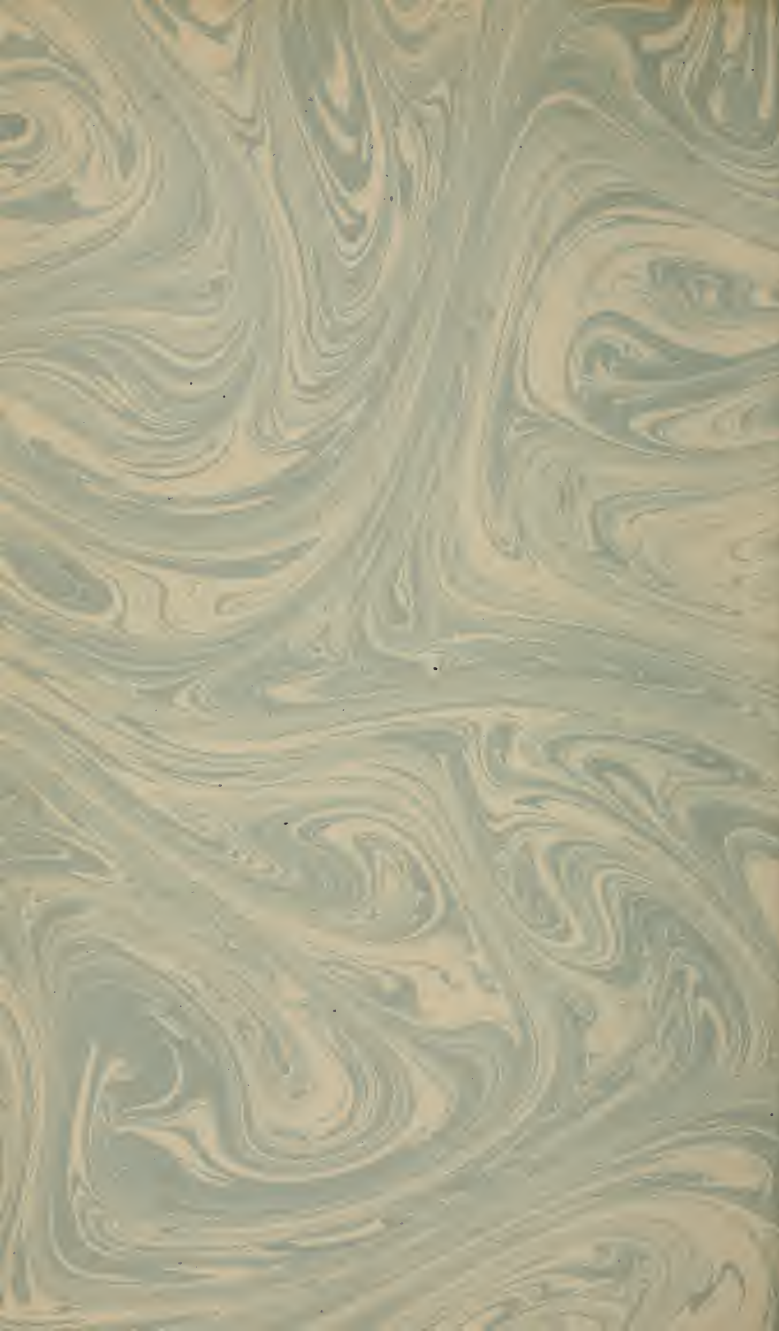
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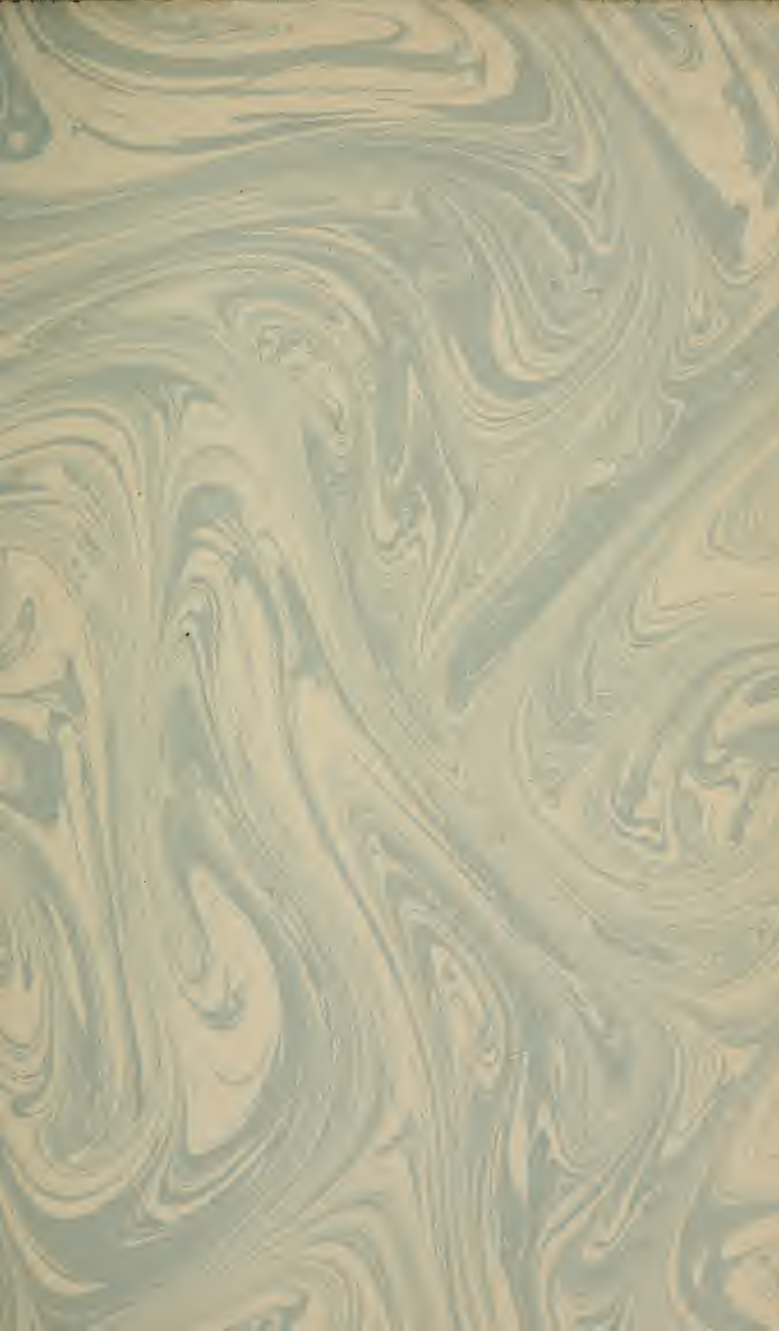
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